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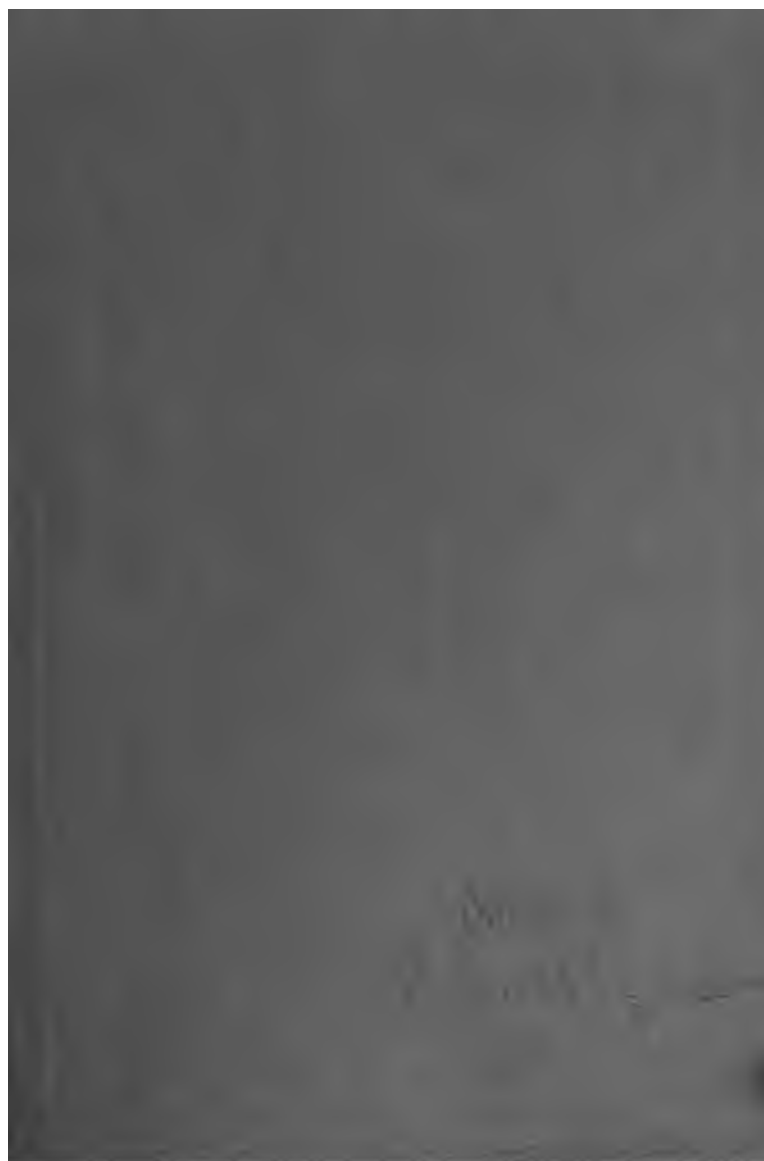
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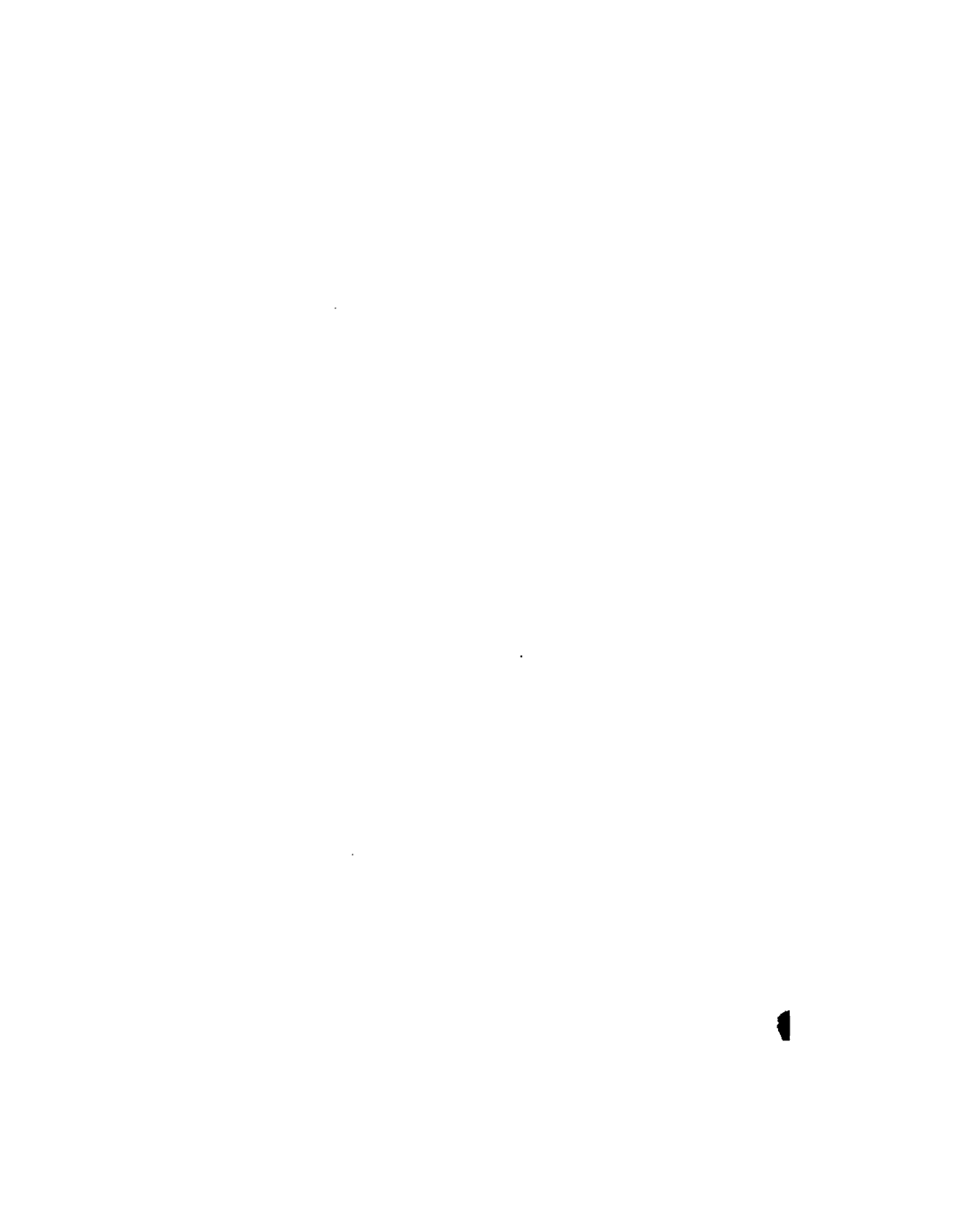


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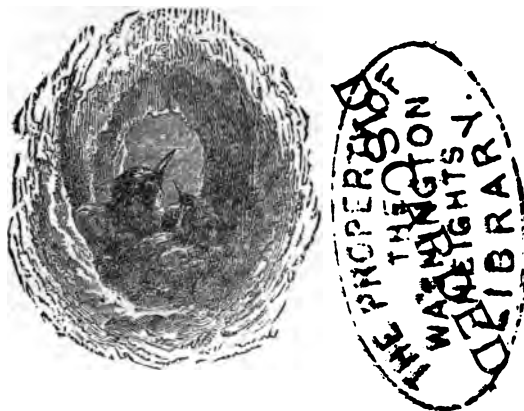
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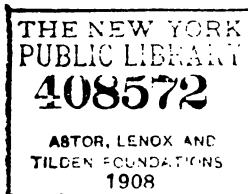
THE OTHER HOUSE.

BY
MARY R. HIGHAM,
AUTHOR OF "CLOVERLY," ETC.



NEW YORK:
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ROY WALKER
CLUB
1876

TO MY FRIEND
EMMA WATTS GANNETT

WITH AN AFFECTION NOT MEASURED BY YEARS.

I Dedicate
THIS BOOK.

1682

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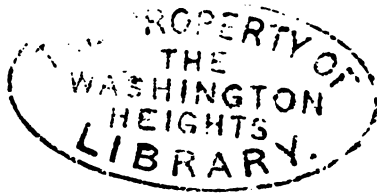
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THE OTHER HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTRUDER.

IT was a little old-fashioned, quiet town; a town that had apparently fallen asleep in the warm sunshine of a drowsy summer day, long, long years ago, and never had the vitality to wake up. It was vertebrate in so far as its one shaded avenue went with a few unimportant streets, by way of ribs, running from it, and a quiet villa or two on the extreme outskirts, that made up a tolerably respectable body.

"The other house" was Dr. Gallatin's—at least the Chantellings had always called it thus; and "the annex" belonged to the clergyman of the parish, the Rev. Harcourt Chantelling, and his sister Clementina. Ever since the Chantellings had come to live at Briarly, in a spirit of most untrammelled friendliness the two houses had been thus

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of the family, a portly man with ruddy color and snow-white hair, was half-reclining in his easy-chair, his eyes dreamily regarding the garden, and the paper that he had been reading dropped idly upon his knee. May, the eldest daughter, was busy with her needlework by the open window, Alice arranging flowers and assisting at conversation from a convenient distance outside on the piazza steps, and Clarice painting a bunch of wild blossoms on a delicate bit of pottery.

Yes, certainly Clarice was rather pretty, though it all might be comprehended in that one word youth. The very newness of life, the look of expectancy out of young eyes make them beautiful, whether they be black, blue, or gray. And Clarice's were always a matter of dispute to strangers at first, they changed so suddenly; and some people had been heard to declare positively they were brown, the darkest shade of brown. If Dr. Galatin had been asked, he would have said "blue—heaven's own color—her poor mother's eyes;" but then the doctor was not to be accurately relied upon in any statement regarding Clarice, and would, like a heathen, have included everything as heavenly that belonged to her. For the rest of the face she was like any other girl of the period, even to the blonde hair, the "light fantastic toe," as somebody



has maliciously called it. She was slight, tall, rather graceful, with a *brusquerie* that was almost pretty, simply because she was young, and an audacity that would have been utterly discourteous but for that very glamor of youth that hides so many palpable defects. She always gave one a sensation of how nice it was to be young, and have dresses and beaux and money, and a blind, doting old father, who thought she couldn't do anything wrong. It didn't seem possible that she could ever grow old, and have gray hairs and wrinkles like the rest of the world, but that she must go through life with the calm certainty that nothing commonplace should ever come to her. She had a good deal of undeveloped strength, but a good deal of nonsense about her too; too many arts and too much simplicity to make her a strictly lovely character; and though she was not good or gentle enough to be beloved by all, her papa, poor misguided man, would have informed you that no more perfect character had ever lived upon the earth. Spoiled? Oh, very likely. Some people would have told you that she was good simply because there was nothing to be bad about. She had always her own way, and those girls who get the cream of life, as it were, and never know anything about the skim-milk underneath, can't take half as much credit for



goodness as those who are sweet-tempered and lovely without the cream. There were a great many of the villagers who did not like her, but there was about an equal proportion of those who did, though she was continually affronting somebody and then making up with him, or else laughing him to very scorn for being so absurd as to mind anything she said or did; although she was not without habits of occasional self-abasement, and sometimes took many deliberate steps toward the valley of humiliation.

She went on very steadily with her work this morning, laying on little dabs of transparent color with a quick, firm touch, her eyes very bright and her lips pressed together, as if she were trying her best not to say sharp things, though she felt fully equal to that emergency or any other. The doctor glanced at her now and again with an inquiring twinkle in his eye.

"Papa," she said finally, dropping her work, as if she were tired of waiting for some one else to propound the question that had trembled on her lips ever since breakfast had been dispatched, "what do you think of him? Do you believe he will make up his mind to stay; and what shall you do if he does?—and you are *not* going to take him in your office, are you?"

"One question at a time, dear. Of whom are you talking, pray?"

"Of that odious young doctor, that presuming mortal who dares invade the sacred precincts of Briarly and steal papa's practice away before his very eyes," said Alice, answering for her. "Clarice has done nothing but vex herself ever since he came. Dr. Lovell, some one said his name was. Papa, shall you take him with you as a partner?"

"Decidedly no, my dears!" and the doctor spoke warmly. "I do not care to divide my practice with any one for years to come. It is not sufficiently large for two, though a young man might extend it somewhat, I suppose. I don't care to enter into such an arrangement with any one. Cheer up, Clarice; you need imagine no deadly wrong done. I believe the young fellow is going to leave town shortly—at least I honestly advised his doing so, and I hardly think there is cause for you to be uneasy if I am not."

"I detest him so, papa!" said Clarice in a half-whisper, holding up her face for him to kiss.

And then the doctor hurried away to his office and left the children—as he still persisted in calling them, though May was four-and-twenty—to themselves.

Clarice went on painting or trying to paint, for

half an hour after the rattle of her father's gig had died away down the street. She tried her very best to bring her thoughts down to the sprig of ferns and bright meadow flowers she was copying, but her thoughts would go back to a few evenings before, and her accidental meeting in her father's office with the young physician who had been trying to establish himself with Dr. Gallatin. He had been perfectly honorable, as her father had told her; had inquired not only if there was a chance of success, but if the doctor would help him to get something of a foothold in the place, no matter how slight; or, better still, if he would take him in his office and let him look forward eventually to a share of his large practice. It had annoyed her father—of that Clarice was quite sure—though apparently he had gotten over his first discomposure, still he was not such a novice in life that he could keep from a certain anxiety when he thought of a younger man, after a time, insidiously superseding him. Take her papa's place, indeed! As if anybody could do that!

So Clarice worked and pouted, knitting her pretty brow and vowing all sorts of mischievous things against an innocent young man, who, having just acquired his profession, was casting about most

earnestly how to employ his time and talents, and honestly gain the bread and butter of life.

Meantime Alice had made into bouquets the apronful of roses she had gathered, and May had put the last stitches in the delicate mending of the household linen, and now that the head of the family had gone, they made up their minds to be very busy until dinner-time. It was rather difficult to determine what the work should be, especially when there was nothing particular to be done. There was nothing ever to be done seemingly as long as May held the household reins in her slender hands. In that respect this eldest daughter was a woman of genius. She managed to live upon the income of a country physician as few could do upon double that sum. She thoroughly satisfied her father. "It was very little in life he wanted," he would often say to his children. Only to have his house and garden in perfect order, flowers blooming upon his table three times a day, that table not heavily loaded, nor even extravagantly supplied, but decked out daintily with pretty china and crystal, the linen always snowy white, and his daughters in pretty dresses sitting about him. It was such a cosy table! Only four of them, and May looked so demure and womanly

behind the old-fashioned urn, pouring her father's coffee, and attending to his wants with that serious, staid deference that made May Gallatin seem even older than she was. She never allowed unpleasant things to come before her father. When he wanted quiet, and the last new book or magazine, he had but to retire to his library; when he wanted home and his family, he had but to open the door and his children were about him, eager to please. He was never disturbed by bills and cares that seem to take the pleasure out of life, and are always vulgarly intruding in even the most refined places. No; May prudently caused the domestic wheels to run so lightly that no one but herself knew the slips, and jars, and frequent oilings they had to receive. What a thing it is to be *disillusion*—to be behind the scenes all one's life. May Gallatin had become a mere automatic scene-shifter, as it were, in her father's house. And no one dreamed of it! Such a placid little woman—but sometimes the deepest currents run stillest, and depths are never found until they are sounded.

May went softly about the room, flecking away the dust from the books and pictures, while Alice closed the blinds and made the room full of pleasant, subdued light—"just the right thing for an artist," she said; but Clarice put up her brushes and

pushed her jar back, saying she was done for the day—she was tired to death of everything, and she couldn't paint in a room that was dark as a church nearly all of the time.

"Clarie is out of temper," commented Alice; "she has not said a pleasant word since papa went away."

"I have not spoken at all," said Clarice, conclusively.

"Then, speak now, dear, and tell me where to put my roses. Aren't they beautiful? Shall we have them on the center-table? Oh, I wish we had some of those tall, light stands, all gilded, with chains and painted tops, like those Mrs. Abury has in her parlor for flowers. Let us bring down the stand from your room, May, and see what we can do with it—and, oh, dear! if we only had some new covers on the chairs," examining with an air of grave scrutiny the somewhat faded rep covering. "How I should like to furnish this room all over again—wouldn't you, May? I am so tired of red. I think I'd choose a soft brown next time."

"But brown never wears well," said practical May.

"Oh, don't it? then I think deep maroon, or this new shade of cardinal—no, deeper than cardinal."

"It would be sure to wear," said May, smiling.

"Nothing fades in imagination. But I think, as long as things stay as they are, it is more *our* house—more full of the *presences* that stay with the old furnishings. That is why a fire, or an auction, or a fashionably-minded young woman is such an affliction in a family; it disposes of too many memories. Suppose we put the sofa in this corner, and I'll bring down my little table, Ally, if you like, for your flowers," with that feeling of pleasure inherent, I believe, in all women, of pulling furniture about and changing the look of everything in a room.

"But we can't make it new if we try," said Clarice, dropping down by the table and leaning her chin upon her hands when they had finished, and sat down to take a survey.

"We wouldn't want it new," said May, softly; "papa is so satisfied. He detests rooms that look as if insane housekeepers were caged in them. And above all, it is quite as good as we can afford."

"I wonder if everybody stops to count the cost like May," and Alice laughed. "It is no consolation to me that we have as good as we can afford."

"But people who have the *whole* of everything are never half as satisfied as those who have the pieces," said May. "When you get a thing, you know it's done, and there's nothing to look forward to; but where there is only a little to begin with,

one seems to be making perpetual gains in life. I like things that have to be kept carefully, and turned, and patched—one keeps gathering up and laying by reminiscences, if nothing more. Why, there's a large, well-darned place in the old nursery carpet up-stairs that I couldn't part with, Alice, not for *any* money. I would as soon think of destroying the whole solar system at one fell swoop, as to change the familiar look of things up there. Hush, Ally; don't whisk things about so—some one has opened the front door."

May drew off her gloves, Clarice dropped her hands in her lap, and sat regarding the door primly, while Alice deposited the duster for safe keeping in May's orderly work-basket. A moment after there was a gentle tap at the door, and Miss Clem Chantelling, from across the way, peeped in. Her face was quite flushed, and the pale lavender bow on her morning cap was decidedly out of line with her mild pug nose. She seemed quite breathless and dropped on the first chair that she could find.

"Oh, my dears," she exclaimed, "I did not mean to come over so early; but I have so many things to say: and as soon as I heard all the talk, I said to Harcourt, 'Those poor children—I shall go straight over there and give them my sympathy

and advice, even if they don't take it.' Clarice never would take it before; but oh, my love, perhaps I might say something that you would listen to now!"

"I'll listen to anything, dear Miss Clem, if you won't put on such a dismal face. It is the most unbecoming thing you can possibly do to get worried and try to be pathetic. If you would only scold me as I deserve, instead."

"But, I can't scold you now," said Miss Clem, with an air of grave concession. "Dr. Lovell is going to stay. He says he shall settle down in Briarly for life, most likely. Imagine my feelings when Harcourt told me at breakfast this morning."

"But I don't see how that can affect us," said Clarice, bewildered. "Everybody has papa."

A remark that was to be taken *cum grano salis*. Dr. Gallatin was certainly a man of whom everybody approved, both as a gentleman and a physician; but there were houses in the village where he was seldom, if ever, called, and people whom he had never visited professionally.

"Oh, but everybody don't have papa, you will find, Clarie," said Miss Clem, sententiously. "Why, here is Mrs. Abury, your father's most devoted adherent, and she told Harcourt that for her part she hailed the advent of a new young practitioner.

He has been spending the evening there, and she finds him wonderfully clever. He certainly looks it; tall, fine eyes, and such a good forehead. But you haven't seen him, girls."

"I have," said Clarice. "He called upon papa, and I was introduced merely. I thought him intensely disagreeable."

"Oh, Clarie! certainly not in manner," cried Alice. "He is a gentleman. I listened to him as he talked to papa. I think he talks well."

"And depend upon it," said Miss Clem, with an air of mild determination, "he is going to take. Harcourt and I have talked it all over, and we think he will take; and if your father could only be persuaded to make him a partner, he would cease to be a rival at once, you know; he would cease to be a rival. He is young, has finished in Paris, he is sure to be a success. And your father, my dears, much as I love him, is getting old."

"I should think his years and experience would be like a suit of chain-mail to him then," said May, who had not spoken before. "I think papa's friends will hardly turn against him now."

"Not turn against him, my dear, but they may take up with somebody else. We all love change. Here's Clarie, for instance, she's always hunting up novelties; and why shouldn't other folks do it?

Why, the Lord himself never gives us two days alike in the year; look at the rain and mist, and frost and snow, and heat and drought, and every sunrise and sunset is something new."

"But I don't think the Lord has anything to do with this matter—this sending another doctor here," interrupted Clarice, brusquely. "I think there is a great deal laid on the Lord that ought not to be. I notice when anything disagreeable happens, people are willing enough to say it is the Lord's will. Now I am not going to insult Him in that way," said Clarice stubbornly.

"My dear," said Miss Clem, who was in the habit of making a *potpourri* of theology and secular affairs, and getting irretrievably mixed up in endeavoring to separate them, "I am sure Harcourt would think you very irreverent, very irreverent indeed."

"Oh, I don't care for Harcourt; I don't care a fig!" cried Clarice impulsively. "He might say anything he pleased to me, and I would not listen. And papa never will take Dr. Lovell in his office; he told me so this very morning, and that ends the whole matter, Miss Clem."

"Then I might as well go home," responded Miss Clem, with a feeling that whatever else she might be deluded into undertaking, she would never start

on a mission again. "I had hoped you would be willing to do something for your dear father's sake, and I am disappointed in you, Clarie."

"You always are, Miss Clem," said that audacious young lady; "but you haven't seen my Beverly jug yet. Come and look at it, there's a good creature, and forget that I have been cross and disagreeable. I have been working at it all the morning."

"Oh, my dear, I don't care for your Beverly jug half as much as I care for your willfulness. You have spoiled her from the beginning, May, and so I have always warned you."

Nevertheless she got up to look at Clarice's bunch of wild flowers, and as she passed the glass she softly patted the rebellious cap-bow into its proper place.

After all, it was very little use to trouble one's self about the affairs of others.

"No one ever got any thanks for it," sighed Miss Clem. "I don't know why I should expect more than other people in this world."

CHAPTER II.

THE RECTORY.

THE Rev. Harcourt Chantelling, whom Dr. Lovell had at once called to see, lived, as I said before, in the old-fashioned white house directly opposite the Gallatins, the vestry of St. Michael's never having felt rich enough to build a modern rectory close to its very modern little church. Miss Clem Chantelling, however, proved quite equal to this pecuniary problem, and solved it at once by unloosing her purse-strings and buying this comfortable spot, into which she felt she had settled herself for life.

There were only these two left out of a large family, the rector being the youngest, and Miss Clem the eldest. She was a cheerful little creature, of the rosy, frost-bitten apple type; a vague and somewhat colorless reproduction of her brother, whom she adored, yet constantly held to stand in need of much advice and direction, both in parish affairs and out of them. Miss Clem's ideas were about as difficult of analysis as the movements of that harmless domestic fowl, the weathercock, and

quite as uncertain of prediction; it was only fair, however, to infer that her intentions were strictly benevolent, though her heart, without any reference to her head, generally guided her. She had been born and nurtured in a sound churchly atmosphere, though by some mysterious power the hereditary principle seemed somewhat in abeyance, which difficulty perhaps was more than made up by its full development in her brother. If Mr. Abury, the senior warden, had been invited to give his opinion on the subject, he would have said very promptly that Mr. Chantelling's principles were of the most approved order of advance; while the junior warden, Mr. Leslie, simply ignoring the differences between high and low, broad and narrow Churchmanship, would have proclaimed him a "good little fellow—a very clever little fellow indeed—lacked stamina perhaps, but all that would come in due time—there was the real Simon pure article hidden away somewhere, he believed—all that was needed was something to bring it out." On the whole, the rector might be called a general favorite. He was rather undersized, and by the side of his portly, well-conditioned wardens, looked somewhat effeminate and school-girlish, it must be confessed, though he was fully thirty-five years of age. But a man with no beard, sandy hair, and

mild blue eyes, seen from behind thin, steel-rimmed glasses, with rather a hesitating manner, could lay no claim to a very powerful personality, except when launching plain truths from his pulpit—then there was no hesitation, and sometimes there was almost vehemence; so that people were fully justified in the assumption that there were two Mr. Chantellings—the one who preached and the one who didn't. And almost everybody liked the one who preached. He might have his little mannerisms and formalities, a love for old books, china, and *bric-à-brac*, but it would never draw him away from that deeper, truer love of winning and saving souls. So when he preached, it was not a mere discharge of high-sounding rhetoric over the heads of his congregation; it was a something that compelled his hearers to listen and resolve to lead different lives; though they failed in carrying them out, the plans were made all the same—and there is a great deal in a good resolve, even if it amounts to nothing more. Some people never have the grace to make a good resolution.

Of course there were those in the village to whom Harcourt Chantelling could never address himself—rude, uncultivated souls, who required a coarser kind of mental pabulum; but these were decidedly outside the pale of the Apostolic Church,

and generally chose to worship the Almighty in a style of dress that would scarcely have been in accord with the subdued elegance of St. Michael's. There were two other churches on one of the side streets, which, like the nets of the Galilean fisherman, drew in all manner of fish, and to judge their sincerity and ardor by the strength of their voices, they were at least quite as much in earnest as their High-Church brethren; for every man, woman, and child who *could* sing, *did* sing. The quaint old Puritan hymns rang through the still streets with a zest and fervor that would touch the most stony-hearted; though Dr. Gallatin, often driving home that way, found himself wondering why it should be a distinguishing mark of denominational zeal to address a remote Lord, or one presumably deaf; but then Dr. Gallatin was never very clear in religious matters. Occasionally he used to drop in at the Sunday morning service, just after the Litany, and once of a way in an evening, when he had not many professional engagements, or grew lonely in the stillness of his library. There was a generally-accepted feeling in the parish that the doctor was lax in his views, and that all ideas of worship had been given first to the wife who had died in her youth and beauty, and then vaguely handed down to the pretty daughters who clustered about his

hearth. "He liked Chantelling for a variety of reasons," he would briefly explain; "chiefly because he was a good fellow, a neighbor, and like one of his own family;" never in any outward way recognizing him as a spiritual adviser; and the "good fellow and neighbor" was far too retiring and timid to attack the doctor's skepticism, which, after all, was a thing so subtle and undefined that it left no loophole of attack. But Miss Clem was not so modest, and often felt like resenting this opinion of the doctor's, she having always felt that her brother was brought into the world expressly to wear lawn sleeves, and the only reason why he was not wearing them was an unpardonable humility, or rather obstinacy, on his part. Perhaps this innate conviction caused her to put on airs—as some of the common people called it—and gave her the unconscious condescension of a dethroned princess. But though the parish, with true parish independence, nudged its neighbors' elbow and smiled its almost audible smile, all agreed that the Chantellings were very delightful, and there was no pleasanter place to drop in of an evening or at odd times than the plain little rectory.

It was an old house, and had never been a grand one, even at its best in its youthful days. The rooms were all low, with big chimneys, and wide

recesses, and all sorts of odd angles and corners, that seemed simply brought into being to set all rules of architecture at open defiance; and the furniture was quite in keeping with the house, ancient, shabby, yet full of a certain refinement and individuality that went far toward reconciling one to its unmistakable ugliness. In the first place there were books everywhere—the recesses were full of them from floor to ceiling—and books are a great point in any household. Indeed, the general make-up of the rooms on the first floor was that of vast book-cases, with a huge arm-chair here and there to lose one's self in, and a few bits of choice pottery and engravings that came in by way of accident, as it were. In one of the dining-room windows Miss Chantelling kept her work-basket and crewels, and the tabby cat slept and dreamed away half of its life on an old velvet hassock in the sun, while all through the long winter bright flowers and trailing vines rioted behind the small, old-fashioned panes of glass, and a huge grate fire was insatiable in its demands for coals. Besides the dining-room, the rest of the house was all library. No one ever dreamed of such a thing as a parlor in the annex. Miss Clem worked her unhealthy roses and pinks with fancy wools on old-fashioned canvas, tended her canary, gave audience-

to her friends, lived and ate in the dining-room, which wore an habitual air of comfort that made it more than beautiful in the eyes of half the parish. It was into this room she walked directly after her interview with the girls at the other house. She found her brother with a large volume on the table before him, hurriedly making extracts on the blank leaves of his note-book. He knew her light, nervous footfall, and did not look up; but this apparent preoccupation had not the slightest effect on Miss Clem. She had her business to attend to, and it would be well for the world, she devoutly thought, if they attended to it as thoroughly as she.

"I am so vexed and annoyed," she said, leaning both hands on the Rev. Harcourt's shoulder, and thus stopping his writing without more ado. "I have been over, just as I told you I should do, trying to persuade those girls into liking Dr. Lovell, and consenting to their father's taking him in as a partner. Will you believe me, Harcourt, absolutely and truly Clarice laughed me to scorn!"

"Oh! is that all?" said the rector, as if relieved. "Well, I knew she would. I told you so all along."

"Yes, but, my dear, you need not be disagreeable, if Clarice was. If there is one thing in life worse

than another, it is this saying 'I told you so.' You know you have often said to yourself—'I told you so,' or 'I knew how it would be'—when the fact is you don't know a thing about it, positively not a thing. I call it willful perversity."

It was of no use protesting against Miss Clem's way of putting things. The rector looked up helplessly.

"Call it anything you like, Clem," said he, "but pray let me finish my notes."

"But who shall I talk to, Harcourt, if not to you? and why need you be disagreeable too? I have had such a trying morning. I love those girls dearly—you know I do—just as if they belonged to us; but they never will take my advice. Harcourt!" as if a sudden bright idea had seized her, "it is Alice who is the wise one of the family, after all. She has never anything to say; and if it is wise to know how to speak, oh, my dear, how much wiser to know when to hold one's tongue."

"Decidedly," admitted the rector gravely; "but May is very quiet."

"Quiet?" and Miss Clem gave a mild satirical sniff. "You do not know May Gallatin. She manages that whole family and rules them with a rod of iron, and they don't know it—positively they don't dream of it, my dear. Clarice thinks she

rules ; but there again is another extreme—Clarice talks too much. Now Alice never has anything to say, and I call her the wise one—the wise one, after all.”

“Yes,” said the rector, feeling for his pencil again, and peering about near-sightedly for his notes. “You know the old Persian proverb, ‘Speech is silver, but silence is golden.’”

“I know you mean that for my benefit,” she said, coloring and laughing good-naturedly; “but you will make no sort of impression on me, my dear. Now what do you suppose I would do in this stagnant place if I had not the other house and those poor motherless girls on my hands to worry over. The nights that I lie awake, planning for them! And, Harcourt, the doctor is getting old; a partner would be a great thing for him, and I am afraid if he don’t accept the opportunity offered, that he will have a formidable rival. Dr. Lovell is very handsome.”

“And you think the ladies will offer him their pulses quicker because of his good looks. Well, there may be something in that,” with his quiet, inward laugh.

“I might as well come to the point at once,” said Miss Clem, who usually sailed all about the harbor before she selected a fitting entrance

"What I want is for you to use your influence with the doctor—there isn't the slightest good of trying it with the girls. Why, Clarice said she didn't care a fig for Harcourt—she called you that. Only think—her clergyman, and so much older too. Not a fig!"

"I am so glad to find it out," said the rector, and then he laughed again. "The best thing about Clarice is that she always will speak the truth."

"But you don't like it, do you?" in a tone of profound incredulity.

"Like it? Of course. Immensely. I like Clarice Gallatin more and more every day. She is going to develop into a fine character, if she is let alone."

"Let alone! And pray who touches her?" with more spirit than she usually chose to exhibit. "She has been let alone all her life. I believe she thinks she might make the sun pause at her nod, like another Joshua, if she chose to try it," resorting, as she usually did in all her dilemmas, to the Scriptures for her figures of speech and comparisons. "My only wonder is that she hasn't tried. That she hasn't tried," she repeated emphatically. "Harcourt, I have no patience with you!"

"So it seems," and then he took Miss Clem's

soft, yellow little hand in his and patted it, and ended by touching it with his lips, which caused that versatile woman to descend from her stilts with her usual precipitancy.

“I don’t want to be a prying old sister,” she began again; “it is bad enough to be the eldest—I am sure it is a position I never craved; but being put here by the hand of Providence (a mysterious Providence, as we all say when we like to question His ways, and don’t want to be irreverent, you know), what can I do but sometimes, with the privilege that years gives one—what can I do, I repeat, but give my advice, and—my head was full of Dr. Lovell a minute ago,” she burst out, “and now I can’t think of anything but Clarice. It was only the other day that she was a child, and now—Harcourt, you said yourself you liked her more and more every day—I am sure I never would have thought of it but for you—”

This time the rector dropped her hands and looked at her in open-mouthed amazement.

“You see, dear,” she went on, trying to avoid his eyes, “a girl, let her be as pretty as possible, needs something more than beauty *to fit* her for a clergyman’s wife. And Clarice’s beauty may fade, but her willfulness never will. Depend upon it, Harcourt, I who love her know it. She would lead any man a

lively career. Young people are sure to begin life with the idea of a holiday; but Clarice does even more—she makes a perfect *festa* of it; but when one is married, it so soon turns out to be a working day."

"Don't fear for me, Clem," said the rector, pushing up his glasses, as if to see into her eyes more clearly. "It is a very annoying thing to me that there must always be some supposition of falling in love if one attempts a friendship with a lady—a child in this case. I have not thought of a wife yet; but there is more of Clarice than you think. One of these days she will develop into a beautiful character; the elements are all there—it only needs the pressure of necessity. But as for me," he added gravely and with a slight hesitation, "I have the Church—I shall always have the Church," and then he took up his pencil, and bent over his book, this time with a look on his face that told Miss Clem not to disturb him.

What were her petty little aims and schemes compared to his great thoughts and lofty ambition? Of course he was gathering materials for one of those beautiful sermons that steeped old Miss Clem's soul in ecstatic bliss, and caused Mrs. Abury to nod her artificial flowers across the aisle to Mrs. Lewis,

and say with a noiseless movement of her lips,
"How *perfectly* lovely."

Of course she could not disturb him again, so she took her unquiet thoughts into her little upper chamber, and sat down by the open window to dream.

CHAPTER III.

BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET.

MISS CLEM sat down in her little dimity rocking-chair, and abandoned herself to dreams. She was fond of the solitude of her own room, usually. It certainly was very sweet and quiet, with that hush that one always feels resting over small villages, with detached houses and broad gardens at the side, and possibly meadows at the back; where one can hear swallows twittering about the eaves, and where sparrows sit tamely on the window-sills, and chirp and eye one, tilting their trim little heads wisely on one side, as if intent on passing a sound judgment on all that is going on under the sun; where the lowing of cattle comes up from distant fields, and where, above it all, the soft lapping of running water strikes the key-note of nature's sweet song. The room, too, was bright with sunshine and gay with the songs of birds in the thick branches outside. A rose-bush that clambered about the window had shaken its snowy petals all over the carpet, and the wind kept drift-

ing in the subtile fragrance of the old-fashioned garden below ; but Miss Clem did not see the rose-leaves any more than she felt the delicate perfume. She did not care for such things just then—she was inwardly seeing the lonely days and years to come in her own home and at the other house, vaguely conscious that the path leading up to it was not as clear as it had been.

She drew a long breath, folded her hands before her, and sat quite still. Much as she wanted to think, she could not ; only her mind kept grasping at little memories, just as we catch flitting glimpses of places and things as we whirl along in the rapid travel of to-day—little gleams and glimpses that afterward we can think over and make up into lasting pictures, if we will. As a general thing, she asked nothing better than to sit with her hands in her lap, living over the past, and dipping into the problems that the future spread before her ; but to-day everything was different. And how foolish and blind she had been not to see how it would end. Could she expect her brother to be content with a lonely life like hers ? For Miss Clem had been young once, and she had given up her dreams just for a baby boy—a little brother that had been placed in her arms more than thirty long years ago. The moisture came into her eyes when she thought

of it. And Harcourt had never known, never would know. And after all it had been no sacrifice—nothing but love and duty; yet—and there was a little pang in her heart as she asked herself the question—would Harcourt do as much for her?

But what so natural to happen as this very thing? A pretty young girl, slowly developing day by day, like a flower unfolding to the sun, thought Miss Clem, who was much given to trite poetical comparisons, and who, now that her own romances were at an end, liked nothing better than to watch this process of evolution in others. And a young girl was her delight; but not Clarice—no Clarice Gallatin. She loved her dearly, it is true but Harcourt, that intellectual and accomplished man, certainly deserved something far better than to be led about by a willful young girl, whose very caprices she trembled to think were generally a most captivating thing to an unsuspecting man. Clarice Gallatin a clergyman's wife! No; that were an utter impossibility; it must be Alice, the wise one of the family, the one who knew when to speak and when to be silent. It might only be a delusion about Clarice, begotten of her own silly fears; but the possibility of its ultimate reality had agitated her not a little. And then she casually looked across to the other house, and noticed that

May too was sitting in her little rocker by the window, and May was doing just what Miss Clem had been doing—taking a little retrospective view of life; not dipping into the future very much, but building up a bit of a dream for all that. Miss Clem fancied that when she nodded and smiled, there was something wistful in her face. Had she too been troubling her head with vague possibilities of the future? The whole thing was wrong from beginning to end. If it became necessary for the elder sister to permanently retire to the background, who so capable of taking her place as Alice? But at the bare thought of that retrograde movement her old eyes overflowed with sudden tears. She looked hastily across at May again, but failed to see her. How could she see anything? For the first time in a long, long while, Miss Clem was crying bitterly.

And May was crying too; not for one reason, but many. Perhaps the sunshine, usually so sweet to her, dazzled her eyes and made them fill; for certainly tears were there, though they did not fall. Miss Clem had given her a great deal to think over in her hurried morning visit. There was the natural anxiety about her father, first of all, and the dread that a younger man would usurp his place. Her life had been so quiet, so absolutely

uneventful, that she had begun to think it was always to go on the same. Why should he grow old, and make it necessary for a younger man to take a rival position? He was hale and ruddy yet, in spite of his white hairs. He had many years before him—years of active life it might be, it must be. Why could it not always go on the same? Now and again, it is true, the doctor would placidly discuss with his children the frailty of existence, or moralize a little upon the vicissitudes of life; but this would probably be after a rare interval of listening to “one of Chantelling’s good sermons,” or when some patient in whom he took more than a friendly interest died and faded out of his life, and in the blank and hush after he was gone his soul had been led to ask grave questions. Yes, practical as May was in every other particular, she was impractical enough to believe that this tranquil happiness was as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Miss Clem had rudely jostled her and wakened her from her dream.

And then, by a sudden transition, the slant rays of sunshine drifting in through the maple boughs carried her mind back to one summer day, almost four years ago, when she had wakened from another dream. She had been on a picnic with all the young people of the village, and she had

wandered away by herself when the purpling twilight had come on, and sat down alone to watch the last red rays of the sun, and the stars beginning to glimmer like glow-worms in the dark, deep blue above it, when some one came and sat beside her, and they had such a long, earnest talk. Not that there had been a word of love in it. No; it was far too solemn and earnest for that, and it was not of this life they had talked at all, but of that other life that was far more beautiful than the heavens above them, and older than the stars. How near they had seemed to each other as they talked. How her heart beat and her pulses quickened with a strange, new joy. She smiled when she thought what the highest type of manhood was to her. A delicate, fair-haired, slender figure; a hesitating manner; a feminine hand; a voice soft and low as a woman's, and yet how it stirred her heart when he spoke. If it were but a whisper, how she would have paused to listen. What would she not have done for his sake; but he had never asked for any sacrifice—and that was all, quite all.

And then she smiled again at her fragment of a memory, thinking, without a pang, how it had sanctified and made beautiful her whole life. For she was too young not to feel that life was very beautiful, even though she had once made a foolish

mistake, which now could never be set right. May, young as she was, knew life's book had been closed for her; its blank leaves all filled, and *Finis* written at the last page. No stormy opening chapters to begin with, no plots, no intrigues, no sorrow deep enough to mar its serenity. Her mother she scarcely remembered. The sweet face that Dr. Gallatin still thought of with a pang was only dimly outlined in this, his eldest daughter's memory. She had, as a child, longed for a mother; she had never known what it was to grieve for her. It did not often move May to smiles or tears to think that her volume could be closed and put away. There was another and more beautiful one yet to be written—a life that would go on forever and forever, until it was made perfect in the wide eternity of God's love. It could not be the great end of life to marry and be given in marriage, when one had *this* to live for, and work for, and at last perhaps gain. Yet, has your heart never failed you when a task was placed before you to accomplish within a given time? Have the heights never seemed high and far and impossible to reach, when you were looking up at them from the valley below? And this was how May felt to-day. She did not want to go on; she wanted to open her book and read a

little way back—to make an idyl out of a memory, not a pang.

She did not for one moment imagine that any other romance could creep into her life, now that this first and only one had been written and ended. It would not be her way. The romance that comes afterward, in middle life, is a much more difficult thing to manage than that of youth. Love casts the same glamor over everything, it is true, glorifying and deifying all it touches; but the freshness, the newness, the very childish unquestioningness, are charms that cease with maturity. We learn to weigh our affections cautiously and prudently, balancing the matters of loss and gain, without being aware of it. We call it the prudence of age, and smile furtively at the children about us, speaking in an apologetic fashion of the thoughtlessness of youth, and all the while both are romances in their way; and the story—ah, well for us all—is one that will never, never grow old.

Miss Clem and May Gallatin had both outlived their dreams, and now they were both crying over it.

CHAPTER IV.

PUZZLED.

IT was a pleasant little party gathered together in the long parlor at the Gallatins—not a party in the society acceptation of the word, but that sort of thing of which people say, “It is not a party at all, you know, only ourselves and the neighbors across the way, or at the other end of the street,” whichever it may happen to be; such little social evenings being very frequent at the other house.

There was Miss Clem, and her brother, of course; and there were Mr. Fred Lewis, and the three Gallatin girls and their father, and with him was the new-comer, Dr. Lovell, who had caused such a commotion in the Gallatin and Chantelling households only the week before, but who, now that he had deliberately settled himself in Briarly, in spite of the elder doctor’s sound advice, and refusal to take him in as a partner, was to be met as a friend and fellow-physician, even though there might be much private pique and disappointment at the result. He had come in to see Dr. Gallatin in his office, and after a little conversation, what more

natural sequence than for him to be invited in the drawing-room?—if the long, pleasant apartment where the family always sat could be dignified with such a title. It certainly looked very sweet and homelike to the stranger, who had scarcely known what it was to have a home since he went into college life, foreign travel, and a medical career. A pleasant room, with open windows, and muslin curtains just softly stirring in the evening air; a big, somewhat disorderly center-table, with a crimson cover gleaming brightly in the lamp-light; heaps of drawings, a panel or two, and some specimens of china piled upon it by a careless hand; a bouquet of roses and mignonette freshly gathered; and a group of people, who all felt perfectly at ease, and talked and laughed with one another, as if nobody were afraid of anybody. There was May upon the old-fashioned sofa, with Miss Clem by her side in a thin, black dress, with the stereotyped relief of rose-colored ribbons at her throat and in her cap; and Alice, who was a little given to attitudinizing, in a low chair by them, her white hands crossed before her, and her white dress covering yards of space behind her, her face serene and her eyes gravely bent upon the little old lady, who was discoursing volubly upon things past and things to come. Mr. Fred Lewis was devoting himself to

Clarie. He was the eldest son of the junior warden of St. Michael's—a young man just dipping into law, and vaguely supposed to be eligible because of his parent's unassailable position, rather than his own transcendent cleverness. He had an unlimited capacity for billiards and croquet, was quite at home in the matter of incipient flirtations, and liked nothing better than to lounge in the Gallatin parlors, and flirt with Clarie, if she would let him. But Clarie didn't let him, and that made all the difference in the world. Since the life of the Gallatins had become entangled, as it were, with the people across the street, she had apparently desired nothing more in the matter of society. But tonight she was unusually gracious to Mr. Fred, who monopolized her in an embarrassed, delighted sort of way, and talked more drivelling nonsense than ever—at least so the rector thought as he walked away, sauntering up and down the room with his hands behind him, interposing a word now and again. He wanted to talk with Clarie about his mission-school and the mill hands, and all the minutiae relative to that work which was just now puzzling and troubling him; and he was sorry to have any one come in and break up their usual family party. He was sorry, too, to see that for once Clarie was bent upon listening and replying

to the interloper, as if she rather enjoyed his open admiration.

"I do wish you would sit down," she cried at length, with her audacious little air of command and *brusquerie*, that Mr. Lewis would have thought captivating to a degree if she had only employed it toward him. "I do dislike to see a man prowling about! Dear Miss Clem, how can you get along with it?"

"Oh, very well," said Miss Clem, secretly delighted to have Clarie find fault with her brother.

"Any one would think," she went on, "that he was making little inward recitals of Hamlet, with the tragic air and general look of the melancholy Dane about him. Just when we all feel like having a comfortable chat, too. It gives one such an odd sensation of ghosts, his coming out from the darkness at all sorts of unexpected corners. I do wish you could keep in the light!"

"Then I shall come and sit down by you," said the rector, smiling.

And then the door opened, and the two physicians made their appearance.

The ladies rose to greet the new-comer, but it was only May and Miss Clem who gave him a clasp of the hand. Alice bowed very quietly, and Clarice had not the grace to rise at all. She leaned

back in her cushioned chair, looking over a pile of engravings with Mr. Lewis, and was apparently so interested as to be almost unconscious of his presence. But Miss Clem, who had ideas of her own, was even more effusive than usual.

"I am so glad you came in this evening," she said, making a place for him on the low crimson sofa. "Perhaps you understand all about old china, and can tell us if this cup is really good. We shall have a class and order for china presently, just as we have for our plants, with a manner of arriving at right conclusions quite equal to counting up petals, stamens, and pistils, if we keep on. Some one sent this to my brother, and I fancied it was a little out of the usual way, or there would not have been such a fuss made over it. It was packed in cotton-wool and much tissue-paper, and was bought at some old shop in London; but perhaps you do not care for such things, Dr. Lovell. Mr. Chantelling has a mild mania, and indeed it is quite fashionable nowadays."

"But I suppose Lovell has seen Italian *faience*, while we have not the faintest conception of its real meaning," added Dr. Gallatin.

"I may have seen it," replied the young man. "I really don't remember. I was three years abroad, but I scarcely think I thought of it once.

Pray don't tell any one, if it was such a shocking thing!" as he noticed Clarie's lifted eyebrows and pretended look of astonishment. "It would be sacrilege to put such a dainty article to absolute use"—taking up the cup. "It is made merely to feed the eye and delight the soul, I suppose."

"I really can not say," said Clarie, with an assurance that she was addressed, although Miss Clem had begun the conversation. "I fancy that people who use such grand china, if they ever do desecrate it by family use, must feel as if they were making a sort of lyric out of the meal. I wonder how it would seem to subsist upon a poem as one would on potatoes. I am afraid I should turn transcendentalist at once."

"It wouldn't be a strictly healthy diet," remarked Mr. Lewis, twirling his long mustache and feeling out of his depth when poems were mentioned. He was a vigorous young man, with vague literary ideas, and he had learned to look upon poetry as a sickly sort of nutriment, quite unworthy a young fellow who had on one occasion held a stroke oar and was possessed of no mean gifts in handling a cue or mallet. "Now I understand all this sort of thing better," he said, touching one of Clarie's panels which he had been exam-

ining just before the doctor came in. "I call this very pretty, don't you?"

It was a bunch of meadow grasses, white and yellow daisies, sprays of golden rod, and a little branch of trailing clematis, tinted with a delicate hand and true fidelity to nature.

"That is very good," said Dr. Lovell, bending over and looking at it with that air of grave professional interest that suits medical men to a charm.

As he stood there bending forward in the full light of the lamp, Clarie noticed him more closely than she had ever opportunity before. He was a tall, well-built man, of thirty years perhaps, with a rather massive figure, and possessed of a certain slow grace of movement that was not common. For that matter nothing about him was common. The merest casual observer, if he had a soul, knew that another soul, strong in earnest endeavor, spoke to his as he passed. There was much to be read in the signs of repression about the firm mouth—repressed ambition, perhaps even love—which with such a man might possibly leave a trace the very reverse of benediction. A face hard to decipher, yet interesting as a study, or problem. He had a deferential, bending attitude in listening, and the steady look out of his dark eyes gave his replies impressiveness; even though it were but a monosyllable, the air of

deference invariably accompanied the tacit agreement. His voice, too, was habitually rich and sonorous, yet capable of much modulation, and at the bedside of a sick woman or child, would be sweet and soothing beyond expression, Clarie thought, watching him with a hot feeling of dislike growing stronger in her heart.

"Yes, that is a nice little thing," her father was saying; "a very nice little thing indeed, Lovell. My little girl painted that for my birthday, and I intend to hang it in the office over the mantel, where I can see it whenever I choose to look up."

"Then Miss Gallatin is not the artist of the family," said Dr. Lovell, turning to May, by whose side he had found himself.

"No, frankly; I don't think the reproduction of daisies and grass on a piece of black wood a great object in life," replied May, smiling. "I prefer seeing them on the meadows and roadsides, and if I want them in the house, I have but to pick them."

"Yes, in the summer," said Miss Clem; "but how about winter?"

"Oh, I can live on a memory six months."

"Is any woman constant enough for that?" inquired Dr. Lovell, with the air of one about to make a diagnosis.

"At least the memory could serve me until the

spring comes again," she reiterated smilingly. "I would always prefer a memory to a servile copy."

"I fear you are a heretic about art, Miss Galatin."

"Is it art?" she asked simply. "I am sure I don't know. I love nature—I haven't dreamed of anything higher."

"As if anything could be higher!" said the father, interposing. "May, how strangely you do put things! But, Lovell, we are all heretics—heretics about everything—you will find that out very soon."

"But not to like beautiful things is worse than being heretical," said Dr. Lovell, looking at Clarie instead of the picture; "it is downright skepticism and infidelity."

"Papa," said the young girl, reaching out her hand for the picture, "I shall not let you put it in your office at all, if you bring me into discussion this way. I shall hang it up-stairs where you can enjoy it in solitude, since you say you do enjoy it. If I had not made you a present of it, I should throw it into the fire at once. There! do not say anything more about it to-night. Miss Clem, Mr. Lewis has given me such a piece of news. Miss Abury is engaged. I tell you at once, you see, because you could never guess."

"Engaged?" said Miss Clem, immediately interested, turning her head on one side and eying the bit of news as a contemplative wren would a worm. "Well, really, it is no surprise to me; she is a sweet girl—a very sweet girl, indeed. But certainly it is to no one whom we know."

"Ah, but it is," replied Clarie. "Papa, guess."

"Indeed, my dear, I think I am even worse at guessing than Miss Clem."

"Then I shall astound you at once. Mr. Harrison."

"Mr. Harrison!"

They all spoke together, and then Miss Clem said faintly, "Why, Mr. Harrison is a widower, and he is quite as old as I am, Harcourt. What could she find to love in such a man?"

"I did not say she was in love," said Clarie; "I simply announced that she was engaged to be married."

"But, upon my word! By Jove, now!" said young Lewis; "I think the two things ought to go together; don't you?"

"You are theoretic," laughed the doctor. "Clarie is practical; it makes all the difference in the world, puss," pinching her cheek. "But I *am* surprised. Why, Harrison is nearly as old as—"

"I," interpolated Miss Clem, rubbing the palms

of her faded small hands together. "And he isn't even rich!"

"He has a competency—that is enough," said Clarie again; "there are a dozen reasons why she should marry him."

"One will do," said the rector. "If she loves him that is quite enough."

"You are behind the age, Mr. Chantelling," said Clarie, with youthful benignity.

"And you are the most absurd little cynic! Don't you believe that girls sometimes fall in love?"

"Oh, yes; all the sentimental ones," throwing her head languidly against the high crimson chair. "She has my sympathy—it is my normal condition. I am always in love—with papa," she supplemented after a little pause.

"Then you should not blame Miss Abury if she follows your example, and falls in love with one old enough to be her father," said Mr. Lewis. "You may do the same thing yourself, Miss Clarie, one of these days."

"Perhaps," said Clarie, making a little screen of her flimsy handkerchief and holding it before the lamp to shade her eyes. "But I have been possessed with the idea that all the interesting ones belong to an extinct species, like Darwin's missing

link, for instance. Just think of living with such a person always! To have him before one three hundred and sixty-five breakfasts, dinners, and teas, for a year! I prefer papa."

Dr. Gallatin rubbed his hands softly and gave a little happy laugh. His daughter's fondness, not to say blind idolatry, always touched him and gave him, without being aware of it, a little pleased moisture about the eyes; but the rector only laughed his low, nervous laugh.

"You forget me entirely, Clarie."

"I don't forget you at all," said that young lady, with calm assurance. "You would be the last man on earth for a woman to fancy."

"I am afraid that is true," and he gave way to a half-sigh.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Clarie, hastily. "I didn't mean quite that. I—I only think there is one man in the world for me, and that is papa."

"I am sure Harcourt has not committed himself that you need refuse him before us all," said Miss Clem, with a throb of absolute delight in her old heart; and then there was a general laugh at poor Clarie, who blushed genuinely, like any young girl who feels she has just overstepped the bounds of propriety.

"I wish he had stayed away," she thought, glanc-

ing up at Dr. Lovell. "One can get along very well with Fred Lewis, but this disagreeable man, sitting bolt upright before me, as if he were a soldier on guard; I detest him cordially, that is just what I do."

But Dr. Lovell fortunately could not know her thoughts. He was looking at her, and wondering if people considered her beautiful. He certainly did. She had a grace and piquancy that surprised him. She surprised him in other ways, too, perhaps by contrast with her sisters, who were decidedly more polite for one thing. Dr. Lovell was a man wholly absorbed in his profession; a man who cared little for society, and less for ladies than anything under the sun; but a faint thrill stirred his senses as he looked at Clarie, and felt for the first time an artist's delight in a touch of beauty. The life which he had laid out for himself was one of toil and study, but for a brief moment he was conscious that for a man of weaker mould than he there might be some danger if he allowed himself to see her often. The young girl had made an impression instantly, although she was scarcely aware of it as she sat in the full light of the lamp, its rays streaming upon her coils of rich, red-gold hair, white, clear-cut features, and low, broad forehead. He thought he had never seen anything more love-

ly, unless it might be one of the faces found in old Roman galleries; not of saints, no—something far removed from that—but a siren it certainly might be. Then, as she lifted her deep violet eyes to his for a moment, with a glance swift and sudden, he concluded it was a siren—those pictures of sirens in medieval ages—that she resembled.

Clarie was not given to blushing, but for the second time that evening the color surged over her face as she saw his intent gaze, her own eyes widening slowly, then defiantly, as she recovered herself in an instant, and turned to Mr. Chantelling. She did not trouble herself to look again at the strange doctor, but devoted herself so wholly and entirely to the rector, that Miss Clem was caused much secret embarrassment and annoyance.

But Dr. Lovell did not leave the house until he had made one more attempt to engage Clarie's attention. He deliberately crossed the room, and asked her to sing something before he left.

"I play very little," she said coldly; "and as for singing, pray excuse me. Mr. Chantelling will tell you that I am pledged to old-fashioned psalmody only. I sing at Sunday-school and in church."

"I will say good-night, then," he said, bending before her a moment with his air of habitual defer-

ence. "Thanks for a very pleasant evening, and good-night."

He went out a moment after with Dr. Gallatin, who took his arm and stood with him on the porch, saying a few unimportant last words; but the door had scarcely closed when he heard a rich, full voice swell out upon the evening air, in the slow, ringing recitative of an old hymn that he loved :

"Flee like a bird to the mountain,
Thou that art weary of sin."

He stood upon the vine-shaded porch, looking straight in upon the room he had just left, and Clarie sitting at the piano, with Mr. Chantelling standing beside her. Her eyes were slightly raised to his; they were the eyes of a siren no longer, but a saint this time, full of soft light and beauty as she sang the sweet, pathetic words. He heard the three verses to the end, then went away wondering why she had refused to sing for him, why she disliked him, and why she made no attempt to conceal her dislike. He was not angry; he cared too little for a woman's opinion to allow his temper to be ruffled by it; he only felt puzzled and chagrined, as any young man naturally would without a clew to explain the matter.

He would have been still more puzzled if he

could have seen Clarie Gallatin an hour or two after, when she had lit her father's lamp and put up her soft cheek to him for her accustomed kiss.

"You were rather rude to young Lovell to-night, weren't you, dear?" he asked, putting a detaining arm around her waist and turning her face up to his so he could look into her eyes.

"I hope so!" said Clarie, coloring violently. "Then he will not come here again. The idea of that odious man mounting guard over me as if I were a prisoner he had just vowed should not escape! What have I done that he should stare at me all the evening, I'd like to know?"

"I thought young girls liked that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing? Mounting guard? No, indeed! Nobody ever treats May like that. Why should I be singled out, I'd like to know?"

This she said with a little laugh, though her eyes were not as full of mirth as usual; but when she saw how annoyed was the expression of her father's face, she drew him back upon the sofa, leaning her cheek against his arm, and taking possession of the hand which rested upon his knee.

"Has anything happened?" she asked. "Have you anything that worries you?"

"I am afraid a new doctor coming into the village is going to make a difference, after all," con-

fessed the father, slowly. "Mrs. Abury has called him in already."

"Mrs. Abury? And she one of our oldest friends! I hate him!" she added, with a petulant half-sob. "I think he might have stayed where he belonged, instead of coming here to worry the best and dearest of fathers. Why don't you go and see Mrs. Abury?"

"Because, dear, it is not the way of the world, and I have too much pride."

"Then I will go!" she cried, with flaming cheeks. "I will tell her she is deceitful, and mean, and under-handed; that she thinks no more of casting off an old friend than an old shoe."

"Stop, stop! You will do nothing of the kind. For my sake you will behave to Mrs. Abury as if we did not care about the matter."

"But it does me good to relieve my mind," argued the girl, burying her face upon his shoulder.

"What a hopelessly unreasonable, faithful little partisan I have in you, Clarie," said Dr. Gallatin smiling. "But I do not think I can afford to quarrel with Lovell, no matter how much I may dislike his coming here, nor, my dear, have you quarrel with him, for that matter. He is a high-toned, honorable young fellow; and I dare say, with all the advantages of foreign education, youth, and

much professional enthusiasm, he is better calculated to-day to be an ornament to the profession than I am. My child, I am growing old. I don't know anything about modern ideas, reforms, etc. The world hasn't been standing still, and I am afraid I have. Dr. Lovell could teach me to-day."

"Papa, I am astonished at you — underrating yourself, and putting a stranger before you in that way! Perhaps if you had taken him in as a partner it would not have been such a dreadful thing, after all. He couldn't work you very much harm if you had him under your thumb, as you have — me, for instance."

"You!" and the doctor laughed in his old hearty way again. "There never was a man so thoroughly ruled by his family! But go to bed, dear, and try and treat Lovell more politely next time. I like him, remember."

"And I do not," said Clarie, rising and performing a mock courtesy. "It makes all the difference in the world, papa. A stranger—young, untried—Oh! you need not tell me about his new ideas and reforms, as if he could raise the profession, when you've been all your life trying to do it, and have grown gray in the service! It isn't Mrs. Abury alone—it is everybody; the old cry will never die out: '*Le roi est mort! vive le roi!*'" in a sudden

accès of passion. "I have no patience with the world or anybody in it. Good-night."

She took up her lamp, and dashed up the old-fashioned staircase, but paused at the first landing to turn back and smile and wave her hand.

"It isn't worth being angry about, papa," she called out. "Pray let us never mention the subject again. Good-night."

CHAPTER V.

DREAMS AND REALITIES.

AFTER that evening at the other house, the rector met Dr. Lovell in the street many times, as was unavoidable, considering the size of the town and the concentration of all respectability within the restricted length of its one wide avenue. The two young men merely bowed first, then by dint of seeing each other so often, grew to inclinations a little more friendly, until at length they were frequently seen arm in arm in deep conversation. Mr. Chantelling thoroughly liked the newcomer, and there were a great many points of sympathy between them. For one thing, they were nearly of an age; both in the glory and fullness of their life; both with lofty yearnings of the future; knowing that life held great, solemn secrets, and wondering vaguely how they would unriddle them; each full of reform—one longing to regenerate the world, a physician of souls; the other longing to regenerate science, a physician of the body. How different, and yet how one at heart they were without being aware of it.

But for some reason or other, in spite of all this

friendliness, Dr. Lovell did not make his appearance in church until several weeks after his entry into Briarly, and Miss Clem had ample time to indulge in a little occasional wonderment, over her brother's coffee, as to the reason of this conspicuous absence. He had never vouchsafed any explanations, neither making pretences of being busy professionally, nor assuming airs of general indifference, and at the end of about a month astonished Miss Clem nearly out of her senses by appearing at the evening service. The old sexton, with a scrupulous deference to strangers, gave him a seat in the body of the church, nearly opposite the Gallatin pew, and in full range of the keen eyes of Miss Clem, who occupied a seat in one of the transepts.

The young man thought it as pretty a little interior as he had ever seen, that church of St. Michael's, in the sweet midsummer evening, and wondered vaguely to himself why he had not come before. The clusters of wax candles about the altar threw just enough light around to bring out the rich crimson of the carpet and lecturn covering, and leave the rest of the chancel in a soft gloom. The pews were all open and cushioned with the same deep shade of crimson, and the font, in front of the reading-desk, had some fair, white lilies and tall, blooming plants in it, gleaming whitely against

the dark red glow. On festivals and saints' days there was always a cross, and the whole church was heavy with the perfume of flowers—for flowers and music were considered as decided accessories to worship, though the two congregations in the back street smiled as significantly when this fact was canvassed as if those double elements were veritable scraps of the scarlet woman's robe.

The congregation came in softly; there was a subdued tread of feet, a dull rustle of silk sweeping over the carpet, the usual stir of taking places and opening books, and then a plaintive strain of melody stole from the recess by the chancel. He could not see who played the instrument, but he had been told it was Clarice, and so, without being aware, the thought of her slender white fingers among the keys interested him in the music. This swelled presently into a flood of tumultuous sound as the vestry door opened; and the surpliced boys entered two by two, followed by the rector with bent head and folded hands.

May Gallatin sat in one of the front pews, facing the chancel, when they came in, and as Mr. Chantelling knelt at the altar rails, she dropped her eyes upon her book, longing to kneel too and hide her face in her hands, as little Miss Chantelling always did when her brother prayed, but not daring before

the whole congregation. No one ever did that but the sister. It seemed a tacit understanding that those two, contrary to all ideas of advanced churchmanship, should monopolize the brief space of time given to private devotion, from which others were excluded. And although Dr. Lovell (it might have been from mere force of habit—one can never tell) bent his head gracefully over his book, he gave a little sidelong glance under his long eyelashes, contriving to read that look on May's face, which she had thought it utterly impossible for any one to decipher.

And then the service began, and everybody seemed intent on his or her devotions, except Miss Chantelling, who, having caught a glimpse of the young doctor's face, fell to studying it, all unaware that for once in her life she was paying no attention to her brother's ringing voice, nor the lessons his lips repeated. She saw him glance at the Gallatin pew and the two girls—by far the nicest-looking girls in the whole neighborhood—and without the least intention on her part, her foolish old heart, brimful as it could be of romance and tenderness, began to conjure up plans and dreams that were only to be equaled by the plans and dreams of her early youth. Three girls, and none of them married, not even engaged! And Dr. Gallatin, kind father and

careful provider as he had always been, could not be expected to go on living forever, wise and beneficent as such an arrangement would certainly prove for the daughters. And then, what were they to do? Matrimony was the only groove into which a young girl's life should run, and here was the very opportunity. True, her own example disproved the fact; but then Miss Clem at fifty owned that life had been somewhat of a failure, and not quite what her fancy had painted it would be in her youth. And here was a young man, well connected, a physician withal, to step directly into the doctor's place—a son, a brother, and a husband; but which girl should it be, pray? May was a trifle too sedate and old, and Alice, who was very sweet and winning, was certainly more suitable for a clergyman's wife—indeed the *only* one that she felt she could possibly entrust with the Rev. Harcourt's affections; so Alice was quite out of the question—as good as engaged, since Miss Clem in her own mind had given her away long ago. And Clarice was too young, too positive by far, too well content to hold the reins and constitute herself the family Jehu on all occasions. It must be May, after all. “And pray why shouldn't it be May?” she asked herself, and then suddenly remembered that she was in church, as she was desired to remember

upon her knees "all sorts and conditions of men," when her heart absolutely refused to have anything to do with but one. It was certainly a very extraordinary proceeding on her part, and Miss Clem bent over her book, sternly following the prayer, mentally resolving to wait until she was out of church to perfect her plans.

But scarcely had the anthem begun when she took up the train of thought just where the prayers had broken it. It surely could not be wicked to let her thoughts wander a little during the singing, which to Miss Clem seemed as fashionable and elaborate as a rare interval of Italian opera in our chief metropolis. The psalms were chanted antiphonally by the rector and the chubby-faced, surpliced boys ranged each side of the chancel; there was an anthem that was always considered a feature by itself, a *duo* between the rector and Clarice, who played the little organ behind the stiff crimson moreen curtains, and whose sweet voice sounded like a lark's, high and clear through the long aisle and open roof. Of course it could not be wicked to divert herself with a little castle-building when the two voices, with which she was so familiar, took up the sweet burden of David's song, "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God"—and yet.

She settled herself back in her pew, and put her lavender-gloved fingers over her eyes to shut out the world and all vain thoughts; but she shut in, by a strange mischance, a flitting glimpse of Dr. Lovell's face turned toward the Gallatin pew again, and it was vain for the innocent schemer to proceed with further devotion. It would be in every way such a suitable thing for May, and *such* an untold comfort to Dr. Gallatin. There would always be some one in the other house then—no danger of new neighbors. Dr. Lovell would take up the practice just as it was left to him. As to May's not liking him, it would be a simple absurdity. Such a very—well, not exactly *handsome* man—but certainly a very *prepossessing* person. A Churchman too—one could always tell—the very way that he held his Prayer-Book showed that he was entirely familiar with public, if not with the entire spirit of personal devotion; and certainly no young person could have been more truly attentive to her brother than Dr. Lovell in the one brief visit he had paid to the annex.

So by the time that the rector had fairly launched his sermon, his meek little sister, with her hand still shading her eyes to tone down the dazzling vision, had married May Gallatin to Dr. Lovell, had seen the elder practitioner respectably interred,

shed a few natural tears on his grave, and disposed of everything and everybody but Clarie to her entire satisfaction. That young woman was a sore trial to more than Miss Clem, that evening. She was essentially a young person who, to use Miss Clem's own words, *would not stay put*. One might as well try to keep a ball of mercury down at zero, with the dog-star in the ascendant, as Clarie Gallatin under the ordinary restrictions of social life.

Miss Clem was so full of her new plans that she could scarcely wait for the benediction to be pronounced and hurry out in the darkness after May, as she lingered to shake hands with some of her neighbors on the porch steps.

"Don't be in such a hurry, dear," she said, putting a detaining hand on the young girl's arm. "I want you to go home with me to-night. Harcourt will be sure to stay for a talk with Mr. Lewis about the next vestry meeting, and I want you to lend me your arm. Ah! Dr. Lovell, this is a lovely evening; so glad to see you in church," she murmured with her usual air of unconscious condescension, extending the tips of her lavender fingers to him.

And then, while he stood irresolutely, saying ordinary commonplaces to the two ladies, who should come sweeping down the aisle but Clarie,

and all Miss Clem's possibilities were made an end of in a moment by that vigorous young woman, who brushed past him, with her music roll, like a sword of justice, in her hand. Naturally Dr. Lovell stepped forward, offering his arm to Miss Clem, but Clarie, as usual, interfered.

"Thanks," she said, giving him a little glance out of her blue eyes, "but we don't need any one. I am here to see to the whole party, and it is quite out of the usual line to accept an escort. It is a mere step. The timidity of women in general, and Miss Clementina Chantelling in particular, is a continual revelation to me, though I've had a constant example before me ever since I've been old enough to lisp your name," tucking her under her arm with perverse audacity, and without a moment's hesitation hurrying her down the steps and under the shadow of the trees, so swiftly that the good woman had scarcely recovered her breath when she was in the street.

All the stars were shining out of the deep, intense blue, with that far-away remoteness that makes them seem so many glow-worms in the dark, and the moon, gliding like a ghost over the tops of the trees, deepened the mystery of the pathway before them, and turned the rows of unassuming gabled and hipped roofs into picturesque silhou-

ettes against the sky. But Clarie, with Miss Clem's hand tucked under her arm, did not stop to think of the beauty of the night ; she was laughing with inward delight as she noticed her old friend's reluctance.

" I feel like asking you to repeat that prayer for deliverance from a great danger, Miss Clem," she said flippantly. " Do you know that insufferable new doctor was about to walk off with you himself ? "

" And pray why should he not ? " asked Miss Clem with such unwonted energy that Clarie stooped to look into her face. The mild little woman had generally thrown out her suggestions tentatively, quite prepared to withdraw them if they were not well received ; but to-night she seemed to have changed her nature completely, and Clarie was at once aware of a change.

" You don't mean to tell me, Miss Clem, that you preferred him to me ? "

" No," said Miss Clem with a little backward glance ; " he has May, and Harcourt is with Alice. I assure you, Clarie, I am more than satisfied."

" And I don't see why May is to be annoyed," cried Clarie with vexation.

" May will not be annoyed. We expect to finish our evening very pleasantly at the rectory. You

will come in, too, Clarie?" And Miss Clem came as near to a chuckle of inward delight as Clarie had a moment before.

"Indeed I will not! The front door is standing open, and that means that papa is home. Miss Clem," looking down into her old friend's eyes, and clasping the little white gate as if she meant to bar the young physician's entrance, "you are all wrong; you will find out how wrong when it is too late. May to fancy Dr. Lovell—or even Alice, for that matter! You had better leave off your castle-building, Miss Clem; it is not your forte."

She spoke quickly, and with a hot flush on her cheeks; but the old lady's eyes had a dewy sparkle in them, and a fond sort of brooding smile crept around her lips.

"Hush, Clarie; don't speak so loud. They will hear you, though they are all walking so slowly. Do you know, my dear, I can't help it? And at my time of life it seems so silly; but I do love a little romance, and I never shall grow so old that I can not feel myself trembling all over with a sudden sense of joy when I see a pair of lovers—on such a night as this," she repeated softly, glancing up at the moon, and unconsciously impersonating a faded little Jessica. "Though I never married myself, you know, I came very near it. Even my

wedding-dress was made, dear. Such a pretty, soft piece of white satin, eight and sixpence the yard!—and dear, very dear, in those times it was. It had a little, low bodice, all piped with satin—real milliner's piping, Clarie. You don't see such work nowadays; now everything is ruffled and box-plaited and tied back, and a woman looks more like an animated rag-bag walking than anything else," said Miss Clem, warming with her subject. "*You* never can tell how neat and lovely a white satin was in those days. But, dear me! I never wore it; and there it is in the garret, in a blue chest, folded up in a linen pillow-case, just as if it were a shroud."

"Miss Clem, did he die?" asked Clarie, abruptly, having heard all about that wedding-gown before.

"He isn't dead yet," replied Miss Clem cheerfully. "You see it didn't kill either of us. I never did believe in that sort of thing—it's unhealthy doctrine; but I never see two foolish young heads close together, or a couple strolling out under the trees in the moonlight, that I don't feel like a girl again; and all the past is with me, and my heart is too full for utterance! It don't make me unhappy. I think I am so glad—so glad!—that as long as the world rolls, it will be full of happiness and love."

"You are a dear old soul!" said Clarie, unloos-

ing her clasp of the gate, and kissing her old friend's forehead. "But when I give up my lover, I shall make an *auto da fé* of my wedding-dress, even though it were piped by the hands of Worth himself; and if it were possible, I would detest lovers and love-making more than I do now! Good-night. No, I wouldn't come in for the world!"

And then she dashed hastily across the street just as the others neared the gate. "She is the dearest, most idiotic old idiot on earth!" she laughed to herself, running up the graveled path; then stopped on the porch for an instant, and peered through the long, open window, to see if her father were there, and make sure that all was right.

He had apparently just come in: for his hat and gloves were lying on the floor by his side, and he had thrown himself upon the sofa. How white his hair looked against the deep, crimson covering, and how nerveless the large, well-formed hand that had fallen by his side! She stepped through the window, and dropped down noiselessly on her knees passing her firm, soft fingers through his scant locks, and dropping a kiss upon his forehead. It was very cold. His face was toward her, and she noticed it was very pale—of a livid color—almost—and great beads of moisture stood out upon it.

"Papa, papa dear!" she whispered, trembling with a nameless thrill of fear.

He stirred, smiled vaguely, and looked up, but his eyes were cloudy and bewildered.

"Ah! Is it you, my little Bessie?" he murmured, drawing her face down to his. "I have waited for you a great while, dear—a great while."

"Oh, papa, it is Clarie, only Clarie! Don't you know me, papa, darling?" cried the young girl.

He opened his eyes again, looking at her frightened face in a dull, troubled sort of way.

"I think I was dreaming," he said in a tired voice, passing his hand over his forehead. Then his eyes closed again, but he still held Clarie's hand.

She did not know what to say or think. She still knelt by his side, her heart-beats sounding in her ears like the tap of a drum. Bessie—that was her mother's name! She had never heard him speak it in all her life before. Why should he be thinking of her mother to-night, and why should he talk so strangely? To be sure, it was nothing new for him to come in tired after a round of visits, and throw himself down upon the sofa, and even sleep; and she remembered that of late she had seen him take that attitude, as if rest were pleasanter now than heretofore. Yet there was a certain confused fear mingling with these explana-

tions. The tears filled her eyes as she thought how she loved him. There was nobody in the world that she loved like him, and in the course of nature he could not live alway. And—what was this that was coming to her? Wouldn't it be possible for God to keep this one great sorrow away for years—for years to come? She did not pray. She felt that He knew, that He must know, all her heart. That was what poor Clarie thought, the tears choking and strangling her as she drew mental pictures of what life would be to those who loved him when he and all the mistakes and troubles of his life had passed beyond the reach of tears and smiles. Oh, if he would only wake up!

“Papa,” she said softly, putting her cheek against his again, “are you asleep? Don't lie here and doze. Let me help you to your room. Or—are you ill, papa? Tell me, tell me what it is!”

There was no reply; only short, labored breathing, his face growing paler, his hands very cold. An impulse of terror brought the young physician, Dr. Lovell, to her mind. He was across the way, and May and Alice. She drew herself softly and tenderly out of her father's grasp, and in an instant was in the rectory library. She went past May and Alice as if she were blind, groping her way

with her hand stretched out before her, and going up to the young doctor softly, but with an excitement beyond control, touching him on the arm.

“Oh, come with me!” she said. “I am afraid papa is very ill. He has gone to sleep, and I can not, I can not wake him up!”

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTOR GALLATIN LEAVES BRIARLY.

IT was like a dream—so strange—so sudden. Dr. Lovell bending over the sleeping father of the family with that air of grave professional interest that seemed never to desert him, and Mr. Chantelling, Miss Clem, and the three girls breathlessly awaiting his verdict.

May and Alice had their arms about each other, and both were crying, but Clarie, walking softly to and fro, with closely-clasped hands and compressed lips, neither shed tears nor spoke. She had not said a word since she had entreated Dr. Lovell to “come, and come quickly.” She felt as if she were in some appalling dream, some nightmare sleep, out of which she would presently wake. She saw the others talking hurriedly; the servants come in, then go out with awe-stricken faces, and Michael, the doctor’s man, a strong young Irishman, lift the recumbent figure in his arms, the white head of her father resting on Dr. Lovell’s shoulder; and then he was carried up-stairs by the two and laid upon *his own bed*.

May went on softly before with a lamp in her hand, the others following more slowly in a half-stunned, ignorant sort of way, not knowing what to do. She put her lamp down and turned to look wistfully and inquiringly into the young doctor's eyes.

"We can do very little," he said gently, with a kind pressure of the hand. "We can only watch and wait. I wish I knew what was the cause. Has there been any undue excitement lately? any unusual fatigue or mental pressure?"

"Oh, no, none," said May in a tear-strangled voice. "He has seemed tired lately—that is all. I thought it might be the heat of summer; he never complained—and yet—I see it now. He acted as if he were growing old—he *said* he was growing old."

Then Michael was questioned closely, but he had little to tell. In such a moment one generally has so much to ask; so many particulars to enter upon; so many details to explain; but Michael—though he knew more than the two women servants—knew comparatively nothing. "The doctor had seemed just as usual, only a trifle tired. He had driven him home early; he had complained of a slight headache, but said he had some writing to do; afterward, on his way from the stable, he had seen him bending over the library table. That was all."

"Could it be anything about—business?" asked Dr. Lovell, hesitating over the question a moment.

About business? money? The idea entered their minds for the first time. Oh, no; it could not be possible!

"Papa never had any anxieties of that kind that we remember—at least he never complained to us," said May, with a little break in her voice; and then they all turned and looked at the figure upon the bed, again.

Miss Clem was moving softly about, shading the lamp, closing the blind, and doing those numberless little things that one does in a sick-room, not because they are absolutely needed, but because one must have something to do; and Dr. Gallatin, for the first time, had opened his eyes, and was watching her apparently with the keenest attention, but his gaze was dull and vacant, and when Clarie bent down to look into his face, it seemed to go past and beyond her—a look that she could not divert or follow. Business? money? It all seemed new to her—but there must be some clew whereby she might unravel the mystery. She went down softly again to the pleasant library, where the light was still burning brightly, and looked about the room to see if there were any traces of her father's occupation. Her heart swelled when she noticed his

chair pushed in front of the table, some drawers open, a packet of letters lying loosely about, and a sheet of paper on which there were a few lines of writing, and a pen dropped over it, as if the hand had stopped suddenly.

Clarie, though she had been in intense sympathy with her father, clairvoyant to his spirit, as it were, all her life, had never intruded upon his privacy. She felt that she had no right to look then; and yet—might not his undue agitation be thus explained? It seemed almost a wrong as she touched the letters, then laid them down reverently when she saw they were nothing more than a few girlish love-letters, yellow with age, the ink well-nigh faded, all of them signed "Bessie." They were her mother's letters—the mother whom she had never known. She tied, with a faded ribbon, these poor little waifs out of a happy past, and put them back into the drawer without reading them. Why had her father taken them out of their hiding-place? And then she remembered that he had called her Bessie, and had said he had been "waiting—waiting so long." She had often wondered if her father had missed this love of his youth—aye, she had even said, in her girlish self-confidence, that now that he had *her*, *she* could make up to him that loss that Miss Clem had once told

her was irreparable. Had she been mistaken all along?

There was only one more paper—a half sheet, blotted, as if the pen had fallen suddenly from his hand. Her eyes filled with hot tears as she read:

“My darlings—my children: I have never talked with you about these things. I have always dreaded to broach the subject; but to-night I have been thinking, and—I may not be rich in to-morrows—but to-morrow I am going—”

There the hand had stopped. What he wanted to say might now never be told. He who had thought himself rich in one day even, had not only been in poverty, but in blindness! She swept the papers back into the drawer, her heart aching with a bitter sense of the unknown which compassed her on every side.

Some one came into the room and bent softly over her, drawing her to him as if he were trying to shield her from some cruel blow. She could not see for tears, but she knew the kind, elderly brother's voice, grave, hushed, and full of sorrow as it was. Why did it sound so far away! Was she still in a dream? Would she never waken—and what was it he was saying! “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.” Why did he say

such words to her? She rose up quickly, gave him one frightened, beseeching look, and then flew up the stairs, her feet scarcely touching the steps. They were all standing about the bed but May; she had her father's white head upon her arm, and the tears were flowing quietly down her cheeks as she looked at him. Clarie stared breathlessly at the group a moment, then she caught the young physician by the arm.

"Oh, do something!" she cried, "do something! Papa thought you knew so much. Don't let him lie like this. Do something for him. Why do you all stand still as if there were nothing to do? He told me himself that you knew far more than he—and he, oh! how many lives he has saved—and yet nothing is done for him!"

Doctor Lovell turned around very gently. "My poor child," he said compassionately, "he is beyond our care. We can do nothing for him now."

She stood quite still, the hot blood rushing to her cheeks, the bitter tears surging into her eyes; then she grew suddenly pale, and, trembling in every limb, threw off the hand which the young doctor had unconsciously laid upon her own, and with a low cry knelt down by May's side and put her cheek against that of her father.

"Papa," she cried, "what is it? Why can not

something be done for you—you who were always doing for everybody? Papa, why can you not speak and tell them what to do? It is Clarie, Clarie—don't you know me, papa?"

"Don't, darling, don't!" sobbed May, and Alice put her arms about her and tried to draw her away.

Doctor Lovell turned away and walked up to the window to look out—to get rid of the pitiful sight, if possible. The night was still and fair, and the evening breeze crept into the house soft and cool. He watched the broad flood of moonlight riot among and silver the leaves of the old elms, the stars burning like beacon lights aloft—the deep blue arch above that spoke of sleep and solemn and eternal quietness, the shaded street with lights twinkling here and there from upper windows, and heard far off the low bubble of water that seemed to say as it went along—

"It keepeth its secret down below,
And so doth Death."

Everything else was strangely still. Not absolute silence, but hush; that solemn hush which is not broken by isolated sounds, but absorbs them into itself. Dr. Lovell's thoughts had not been tainted by any solemnity or pathos about the old physician before him; such sentiments are easier

to affect than to absolutely feel toward a stranger, about whom the only thing that was pitiful was his position as father to three dependent, motherless girls. It touched him more to look at Clarie, with her life all before her, than at him who had passed through that probationary term, and now stood upon the threshold of another and a higher life. That people are not always ready for such exchanges did not at once enter his mind. When one looks back over seventy years of life, one is apt to say it is surely time to think of another world. But when one is young, one can afford to be prodigal—prodigal of moralizing, prodigal of time, aye, even of life.

Clarie's hand upon his arm recalled him to himself. "You must tell me again," she said. "You must tell me again—I do not understand. Can you do nothing? you who are so wise, who ought to know so well?"

"I grieve to say I can do nothing now," he murmured, lowering his gaze so that he might not see the pleading in her eyes.

She threw her hand away with a gesture of horror. "Cruel, cruel!" she sobbed in the agony of her despair. "You might have saved him if you had tried!" And she turned and fled from the room.

CHAPTER VII.

SOMETHING TO BEAR.

THE news flashed through the village like wildfire.

Doctor Gallatin had been one who drew friends to him by that sort of magnetic influence that some men possess to a remarkable degree, and all of the old inhabitants, and indeed many of the new, felt a thrill of real emotion when it was known that he was dead. Mr. Chantelling, it is needless to say, was much at the other house, consoling and planning for them all, and Miss Clem could do nothing less than take up her positive abode there, treating the three girls as if they were confirmed invalids, needing the most patient care and minute attention. Of course she could not stop talking. The very solemnity and presence of death could not deter her from a certain amount of planning and maneuvering, and even before the funeral she had to check herself many times from turning it into a positive marriage ceremony—Alice and Harcourt, May and Doctor Lovell, being

duly decked for the double bridal. It confused her very much to come back every time to only a funeral. Bitterly as she grieved, it *did* seem a little hard that the law of compensation couldn't come in here, or even a gleam of the coming of that law; but, strange to say, Alice had scarcely a word to bestow on the rector, and the rector was equally absorbed in his attentions to the bereaved family as a whole—not in parts. In fact, if he talked to one more than another, it was certainly Clarice; and as for Doctor Lovell, he had never entered the house after that one sad night of watching and of death. Things were going wrong even in this early stage of Miss Clem's castle-building, and she felt that perhaps in time her constructive ability might be questioned—a stronger hand—a more vigorous touch needed—but whose should it be, pray? And what was all this talk of Harcourt's about the girls being unprovided for, so many bad debts, and such a careless way of keeping accounts as the doctor had? Poor dears! that was only another reason why they should marry at once! And as she turned these thoughts over in her mind she concluded it was a wise and safe provision of the father to steal away with his life from them all, and thereby cause her little plan to be executed in a thoroughly romantic and

proper way. But why didn't Harcourt speak? And why didn't he take Alice's hand on that first lonely evening, when they were all together in the library after the funeral, and why didn't he say before them all, "This is my wife?" That was the way they always did it in books, and that would have been Miss Clem's way; but instead—and here Miss Clem waxed wroth—he had taken Clarie in his arms, and had cried over her as if she had been a child. Harcourt was certainly behaving in a most extraordinary manner. And why should it be Clarie, always Clarie? There were two other girls to worry about. And Miss Clem knit her brows, and took another little dip into architecture.

It was all very true, there were two other girls to worry over, and the all-important question of how they were to live was a grave problem to solve. The entire fortune which their father left behind him was the house; a well-appointed stable; a somewhat incoherent list of people who had been owing him for years; several bills that were known to be good; an old policy of life insurance that had somehow been forgotten, the premium of which had not been paid for years, and the furniture, which had been gradually growing older and more decrepit every year. The girls

had laughingly re-covered the drawing-room suite only the week before. It had seemed so easy to riot in extravagance, if it were only in imagination, when the father was alive; but now that he was gone, they stared into each other's faces and asked, "Upon what are we to live?"

They were asking the Reverend Harcourt and Miss Clem this very question when Mrs. Abury came in about a week after the funeral. Mrs. Abury called herself one of the old physician's sincerest mourners. Living as she did, in a highly rarefied social air, it was not seemly, or indeed even possible, that she should show any undignified signs of grief; but—alone and in the privacy that the best blue-chamber afforded her—she had cried from absolute bitterness of heart because she had been so silly as to call in a new physician, and thereby possibly have wounded the feelings of the dear old friend who had taken care of her ever since she was a child. She ventured to say something like this to May when she paid this visit of condolence, and found them all sitting in the sunny parlor, which somehow would look sad in spite of the sunshine flooding it—as if the real sunshine had gone out of it, and this flicker and glare were only a mockery, a sort of scenic deception—at least Mrs. Abury, who was much given to hyperbole

and figures of speech, put it to herself in this way, concluding it was *rather* a neat little simile—though perhaps for the wife of a church-warden she might have done better than allude, even in thought, to scenic effects.

The girls, pale as death in the extreme blackness of their mourning, had met her with something of composure; but when she began to pour forth her self-reproaches with her tears, May and Alice broke down utterly. It was only Clarie who held her head erect and looked at her with eyes in which disdain and pride struggled for supremacy.

"Sorry!" she echoed, raising her head, "and what good does it do papa now, or any of us for that matter, that you are sorry? People cast off their old friends as they do their clothing, and never think anything about it. I know how papa felt as to Dr. Lovell superseding him. Oh, you need not shake your head—superseding is the word. But he never dared trust himself to speak of those old friends who were so charmed with a new face that they forgot what he had been to them and their families all his life."

"Oh, Clarie, Clarie!" cried Mrs. Abury with a shocked, grieved face; "I can not have you say such bitter things. I loved your father dearly. We never thought of grieving him."

"No," said Clarie with another passionate burst, 'no one ever thinks. But do you call it a good excuse? Do you suppose it will be of any avail to us, when we stand before the awful tribunal at the last day, to say that we *never thought?* Oh, Mrs. Abury, we *do* think; we are thinking all the time! I wonder sometimes if God will be compassionate when we put Him off with such silly excuses; or perhaps it is God's fault—His fault, that we are so blind and silly as to say it at all." And her voice broke suddenly into sobs.

"You ought not to let her excite herself in this way," said Mrs. Abury, wiping her own eyes again, and making sure that she had just reddened them sufficiently for the mournful occasion; "she is nervous and over-sensitive—your poor papa was. We loved him like a father; that *you* know, my dear."

"Yes," said May quietly, "we have been sure of your sympathy. Every one is very kind."

But when her guest had departed, May went up to Clarie softly, and putting both arms around her neck, looked down into her eyes. She had been so much surprised at the young girl's outburst that she did not know what to say; so she only looked into her eyes, and kissed her with an air of grave tender inquiry.

"Don't look at me so, May," she sobbed, her blue eyes flowing over with sudden tears. "I treated her with positive forbearance; I did indeed, May. It was all I could do not to burst out upon her and ask how she had the audacity to come and pretend to grieve with us. We did not ask her sympathy and her tears. She never shed any. I watched her all the time."

"She had a most beautiful handkerchief," murmured Miss Clem irrelevantly; "I saw it plainly when she pressed it to her eyes. There was a lovely 'A' in the corner; and I do think—indeed I know—she cried."

The rector rose rather suddenly and began pacing the room with his hands behind him and something like a flush on his pale cheeks as Clarie went on, never heeding Miss Clem's soft little half-soliloquy.

"I wonder what she will say when she knows that we have nothing—absolutely nothing in the world? I don't believe she will care as much for us then as she pretends to do now. Oh, May, what are we going to do about it all? It seems so hard to look forward to. I wonder papa never thought; he who had stood by so many death-beds, and knew for a surety just what must come! Oh, it seems so hard!" clasping her hands.

And then there was a painful pause, during which Miss Clem secretly wiped her eyes behind her pocket-handkerchief, and Clarie looked fixedly straight ahead, as if she were trying to make a plain path for them all out of the sunshine streaming in upon the floor and dancing through the half-closed Venetian blinds. All at once she got up and shut out the sunlight, just as if she were trying to shut it out from her life.

"I can see just what it will be," she said in a stifled voice, and with an impatient upward movement of her white hands. "May will drudge her life out in petty household economies, and Alice and I will turn school-ma'ams and teach music and painting or wax flowers, perhaps take in fine sewing and spoil our eyes, and tempers, and forefingers, too; and probably we will let out some of the upper rooms to single gentlemen—Dr. Lovell, for instance. He can have papa's office, and buy his books and table and easy-chair. Oh, papa, papa!" she sobbed, dropping her head on the table at this passionate outburst; "I want to die—that is what I want to do! I want to get away from it all!"

"But one can't die when one wants to," said Miss Clem, in her soft, pathetic voice of remonstrance. "Besides, it is very wicked, Harcourt would tell you if he were not so absorbed just now in his

thoughts, that I'm sure I never pretend to understand."

The Rev. Harcourt stopped his walk rather abruptly at this and bent over Clarie, saying something to her in a low voice which the others did not hear. There was always a suggestion of feminine affectionateness in his manner toward the girls, particularly Clarie; and Miss Clem looked up amazed to hear her say impetuously, "I can not think it—I will not believe you."

"You ought not to contradict Harcourt," she said, dropping her hands in amazement at the young girl's variable temper.

"And why not, pray?" she asked with a half smile. "Because he was born in one year and I somewhat later, am I to believe everything he says is law and gospel? No, thank you." But she took his hand in hers and put her face down upon it, crying under her breath, "Oh, papa! why couldn't we both have gone together?"

Ah! well for the dead that they are held so safe in God's keeping, so lost in the eternity of His love, that their eyes are turned far from this world and all the pain and bitterness they have left behind. What would not her father have suffered could he have seen her? Could he have been happy even in that far-away Paradise, if they, his

loved ones, were unhappy? Would even the rest and peace of heaven be sweet to him if it were broken by the sound of girlish sobs?

"Don't," said May, softly, with that feeling in her heart of the dear human presence which she could not rid herself of, and which it seemed was so near it might be grieved; "it almost seems as if he could see into our hearts now."

"Perhaps he can," said Alice, in an awe-stricken whisper, lifting her eyes to the cloudless sky, which for the first time in her life seemed a barrier instead of a beauty to her, shadowing and circumscribing her vision. "And we could have said so much to him only a week ago!" realizing for the first time that awful and absolute mystery of severance. A week ago! Oh, how much had happened since then!

"It seems so curious," Miss Clem was rambling on, "one wants to die and another wants to live. I have sometimes thought it was such a strange thing that He whose ear is open to every cry, must listen and weigh it all and decide what was best, without any thought of individual wishes or hopes; and, oh! my dears, no one but Omnipotence could do it. Think of the confusion of petitions! I am sure it makes me crazy to think over the people I know who want things, and who don't want them.

Dear me, I hope I am saying nothing irreverent, I have the strangest thoughts sometimes. I only know it is a mercy that we are not left utterly to ourselves."

Miss Clem's rambling way of moralizing usually brought smiles to the girls' faces; but it was quite impossible for any of them to smile now, nor could they make any reply. They only saw the kind, foolish old heart back of all her vagaries, and even her sympathy was sweet to them.

"Mr. Chantelling," said May, "I have been thinking for several days past that we ought to make up our minds definitely about doing something to help ourselves. Clarie makes a burlesque of it, but in her heart I know Clarie would love to help me. We might stay in this house, couldn't we? for it would be the hardest thing in the world to leave it—but we could open a school. I could teach little children, I am sure, and we have always needed a select school in the village. I used to hear papa say so," stilling her voice into something like calmness. "I think that people would not refuse me, for our father's sake, if not for my own."

"Of course they would not refuse you," said Miss Clem; "but oh, May, think of it—the drudgery, and the doubtful position it puts you all in. It breaks my heart to have it so!"

"It doesn't break mine," cried Clarie, stoutly coming to May's rescue. "You thought truly, dear, when you said I was making a burlesque of it all; for, indeed, I consider it is the only thing for us to do. And, Mr. Chantelling, you think as we do, don't you? You think a lady can do anything and be a lady still."

"I do, indeed, Clarie," replied the rector; "but I dread the position for you."

"And why should you dread it for me?" interrogated Clarie, her head erect, her eyes quite dry now, and a kind of proud smile on her lips, as if she loved to defy the world, and was glad to hurl her youthful disdain at it. "We have our health and our hands. Alice, you haven't said a word. Why do you leave it all to May and to me?"

"Because I feel you and May will settle it right, and I can do as you can. I am not brave or strong; I can not lead, but I can follow."

Miss Clem's eyes, with all her heart in them, caught the rector's, and she made an encouraging, noiseless little movement of the lips. If he would only take her hand now! It would have been better if he had done it earlier; but at least he could do it now!

And Mr. Chantelling looked down at the faded, yet expressive countenance of his sister, and seeing

something there so entirely and absolutely strange and unusual, faced about suddenly, wiped his glasses, and said, "Did you think of any other plan, Clem? If you did, perhaps it may answer our question?"

"Answer it?" echoed Miss Clem resentfully, "it must be asked first, Harcourt, and I shall never find any one who does it to suit me! There never was anything so blind and idiotic as a man—never! never!"

"Why, I thought we were talking of the school! I beg your pardon, Clem. What man were you speaking of, dear?"

"The blindest of the blind! the most willful, insufferable idiot!—oh, Harcourt, let us go home; when I think of it all I lose my temper, and I can't be responsible for myself. I am sure I shall be saying the most terrible things."

"Don't go," appealed May. "Don't go, at least until you tell me you will help me form the school and give it your support. I can do nothing without you—nothing."

She stood before him as if she would bar his way until he was forced to answer, and, as he looked down at her slight little figure, her deep mourning robes, and her nervous, interlaced fingers, he felt a sudden tightening as if hands had been rudely placed around his throat.

"May," he said brokenly, "whatever you want that I can get, you shall have. You may command me as you please. You must know that whatever you desire to do would seem right in my eyes."

And then he bent down and kissed her on the forehead before them all, caught up his hat and rushed out of the room and out of the house, leaving Miss Clem sitting like a statue looking straight before her.

Certainly the Reverend Harcourt was behaving in a most extraordinary manner !

CHAPTER VIII.

POETRY AND PROSE.

LIFE went on quietly enough at the other house; and after the first surprise and shock, life went on quietly enough with Dr. Gallatin's patients. At first it had seemed as if he could scarcely be spared; but popular opinion decided that Dr. Lovell *might* in time fill his place. So little does it take to efface old memories! So little do we heed it when a soul slips from out our midst, leaving behind it the solemn seal of eternal silence!

I suppose it must always be so under a great affliction. People are shocked—perhaps even grieve bitterly—but in a week it is all over. After the funeral it is necessary to take up the burden of life again, just where it was laid down when death had sent this shock; and after the emotions are disposed of—the proper sentiment wasted—then there is always somebody who has to come to the front and pick up the cares, and duties, and responsibilities that no one thinks of or claims. That was May's part. That had always been her part. And

whatever it might be to others, it was a trying, solemn time to May Gallatin. The days seemed so long and dreary, and yet they went so swiftly on; it would soon be September, and time for the school to begin, upon which she had so resolutely set her mind. She rarely, if ever, spoke to the two girls about it after that first long talk and decision. Her old household economies absorbed just as much of her time as ever. May had always molded her actions with a regard for others, so it was no new thing to plan for the future, to try and make much of the little that was left to her, and to thank God that she could do it, and that it was He who gave her the will and the strength to do. To every separate soul there seems to be a separate Scripture, and to the gentle, brave, little woman, perhaps the sweetest words that were ever written was that one verse about "casting all our care upon God." She always paused and finished it softly to herself, dwelling tenderly upon the words, "for He careth for you." And that was all May asked for or wanted. She never dreamed of anything else coming into her life.

As for Alice, she never had any absorbing duties. Her life ran along so close by May's that it never seemed there was anything left to do. She wanted to help; but it was quite one matter to theorize,

and another to practice. She had heard self-dependent women say there was a glory and triumph in meeting the world and battling it; but when she looked at her small, delicate hands, she felt like rushing ingloriously from the field. Work? She who had only made an idle dream out of life, now found that it was a word full of signification. She could not pretend to define it, and, oh! what a little weapon—a girl's untried hands—to go out with and do battle against the world!

Then, with a strange trembling coming over her, she would set herself all sorts of tasks. Not that it was absolutely necessary to begin work; the school would not open until September, but when it did open she wanted to take her share of the burden. May and Clarie should not bear it all. For May, who had been, and now must always be in some sort, the drudge of the family, had not all the work to do in this matter. Clarie was to give lessons in painting and German, as well as in instrumental and vocal music. The young girl had bravely gone out and sought her own scholars, but Mr. Chantelling had spoken for May. It was he who had made every arrangement and perfected every plan. "You shall have all that you want, May," he had said to her that night of their first talk on the subject; but he had never kissed her

again, nor had he ever spoken of his strange conduct, that Miss Clem had set down in her own mind as an extraordinary aberration on the part of the Rev. Harcourt, and May had remembered with a glow in her heart.

So Alice gave herself long tasks just to see how it would seem to turn life into bare, unlovely monotony. She rose early and found something to take up the moment that breakfast was finished. She spent long hours in the silence of her own room, doing something there that it thrilled her whole soul with pleasure to do, and yet doing it secretly, fearful of reproof or defeat. It was a lovely world, after all, and it seemed such a good place for so many people, why not for her? And once, in one of these overflowing bursts of joy at the prodigality and loveliness of nature around her, she ventured to let her thoughts drift away from the prose of life into the poetry of it, writing it out with a sweet, subtle happiness, that she could thus utter it. It came to her like a revelation—all those aspirations and longings which heretofore had lain dormant—unexpressed. She longed to put some of her thoughts into words: to take the beautiful things that go to make up a beautiful life and idealize them. "It might come to something," she mused, with a dreamy eye. "Our thoughts must

work out something for ourselves, if not for others. Nothing is wasted in this life, so how can our dreams and our fancies go for naught? God would not give them to us if they were to be simply wasted." So she took all the blessedness and beauty as it drifted to her heart, and shut it therein, as one may put away a flower to mark a happy time, in token of a joy that God had helped her to perfect. She could not tell her glad secret to anybody. It would be time enough to tell them all when success should attend her work. Of defeat she did not dream, and when she sent off a business-looking envelope directed to the editor of one of the largest magazines in the country, she felt a certain pride that the credit of the family was in her hands. Alice had chosen the weapon with which she was to overcome the world—and it was nothing but a pen!

As for Clarie, it would have been hard to tell what she thought. Her nature was light-hearted and elastic, but she was also brave, and she tried to feel a sort of disdain of trouble—the disdain of youth—together with a certain pride in overcoming it. She could not throw a glamour over each stern duty as Alice did, nor was she able to make out of life a fairy tale or a poem. On the contrary, in what a new light the world appeared to her! Her own

life—what was it? A bubble, a vapor, a dream. And yet, trite as were the words to her, she had never realized their meaning until she had knelt by the dead body of the loved one who had wakened from that dream. It seemed strange and unreal to carry such a weight about in her young heart, and to know that she was almost powerless to contend against it. It would be foolish to say that she felt no mortification involved in their change of life, but her grief at the loss of her father rose and cast out all lesser feeling. In this state of mind work was absolute consolation to her. Of course she thought, with that sweeping generalization that the young are prone to employ, that happiness of all kinds had deserted her forever; and she was sometimes grateful for the anticipated work, glad of anything that would take her away from herself. Through the day she went about with a cheerful air, putting aside anxieties with a proud sort of defiance; but when the day was over, and the three girls gathered together in their usual places about the library table, the room seemed vaguely like a kind of tomb to Clarie—a tomb in which all her hopes and joys were buried. Sometimes she wondered, with a half-superstitious awe, if her father were near, looking at her with tender spiritual sight, reading her unspoken thought, yet unable to make

himself known. If he were not near, why did she have this subtile sense of protection ; a feeling that she could not lose, even though the great boundary lines of an unknown world separated them ?

And then her eyes would grow wistful and wet with sudden tears, and she would leave the girls, and sit down by the open window, and lean her head upon her hand, looking out at the stars, a great and glittering tangle, and wonder if they knew of the trouble and sorrow that they were looking down upon with such solemn, abiding eyes—they were so old, so wise, it might be. Could it be possible that they knew ?

So it came to pass that Alice and Clarie exchanged natures, as it were, when the day began to draw to a close. Clarie, active, restless, brave through the day, grew silent and thoughtful as the purpling shadows began to creep like silent ghosts into the quiet old house ; and Alice, the one who had never allowed anything to disturb her seeming serenity, grew preoccupied, nervous, and, finally donning her hat and shawl, would go out. She never stayed very long ; and once when May asked her where she had been, she blushed painfully and said : “ Oh, for a little walk—just to the post-office,” that was all. One night, when she and Clarie were alone in the library, just as another

day was waning, Clarie startled her by abruptly asking :

"Alice, do you expect a love-letter, that you are so anxious about the post?"

Alice flushed crimson. "I wish I could tell you," she said, "what I have been doing. I have kept it to myself all along; but, now that the end is so very near, I feel that I want somebody to bear it with me."

"Put it here," cried Clarie, with mock solemnity, bowing her shoulders as if to receive a burden. "I am equal to bear any weight in life."

"Oh, but I can not tell you here."

"Here? In the library? What is there in this room to prevent you from telling a secret? It isn't a whispering gallery, is it?"

"Oh, darling," said Alice, nervously, "Miss Clem might come in, or Mr. Chantelling, or May might ask what we were talking about; and I never kept anything from May before in my life. I don't want to now, but I have planned it for a surprise."

"Alice!" exclaimed Clarie, "if you don't confess at once I shall resort to thumb-screws, though I warn you now, if it is any conspiracy against Church or State, I shall betray you."

"I am sorry I began," said Alice, with a little air of offense; "but I thought it would be so com-

forting to talk with somebody about it. I am sorry I didn't keep it to myself a little longer," and she turned away to conceal the sudden mist that clouded her eyes.

"I think you are the oddest girl!" laughed Clarie. "I never feel hurt if any one laughs at me."

"But it isn't *me* exactly," persisted Alice. "I suppose I must have something of the feeling that a child gives to her first doll, or a woman to her first baby, for that matter, for — darling — I have been writing a poem!" And Alice's cheeks burned at the confession. "And I have sent it to a magazine—oh, I will not tell you which—and I have expected an answer every day and every day, and it don't come. Do you think, dear, it can be lost?"

But Clarie only laughed and patted Alice's flushed cheek. "A genius in the family! Who would have thought it should be you, not me! What do you suppose Miss Clem would say? Oh! Alice, I am so glad you have the heart to do it!"

"But do you think they will accept it, dear?"

"How can I tell?" replied Clarie. "Of course they will take it if the editor knows enough to detect a good thing; but half of them don't know; that is, if we are to believe the great army of

rejected authors. But I wish you had told me sooner, then I could have read it before it went on its mission."

"But I have saved a copy. See, here it is in my pocket. I have been dying to show it to you all day."

Alice's fingers trembled nervously as she drew the folded paper from her pocket, and then the two heads, leaning fondly together, bent over it in the fading light that came in through the window.

Clarie read slowly for a moment, then leaned back, with her eyes fixed dreamily upon the sky. "Read it to me, Allie, dear," she said; "it will sound so much better that way."

And Alice read, a little huskily, and with a certain tremble in her voice :

Was there ever a summer as sweet as this ?
Was there ever 'mong Junes as fair a June ?
Birds that are singing in full-throated bliss,
Ask the same question, and ask it in tune.

I can not sing such a song if I would,
I only know that my whole heart is stirred ;
Life seems so loving, beneficent, good,
Why can't I trill out my joy like a bird ?

Bees that are droning, how sleepy you sing ;
What are you telling each other, I pray ?
Whence does your secret of happiness spring ?
No matter—I'm happy as you are to-day !

Lily bells swinging their blossoms of snow,
Violets shedding their tender perfume,
Dipped are the roses in sunset's rich glow,
Flushed with the dawn is the sweetbriar's bloom.

Foolish young butterflies, bright-tinted things,
Keep on the wing through the slow summer hours:
Would I were like them, and would I had wings,
To drift in my joy to the heart of the flowers.

Linger, ye moments—I pray you pass slow;
Earth is so beautiful, heaven so near;
Everything possible even below,
Sweetest of months is the June of this year.

There was a little pause after she had ended, and then Clarie said: "It is very nice; that is—it is very nice if you feel it all; but—but—isn't there an awful lie somewhere?"

"A lie?" faltered Alice.

"Yes, dear; you know I never can gloss things over and say them smoothly like other people. I always thought the inspired creatures that wrote generally gave their heart to the public—made a sort of free-will offering, as it were, of their own individual emotions, and—I can't think this has been such a lovely summer to you."

"But June was," answered Alice, dreamily. "As I look back now, in our sorrow, and think of it, it was a Paradise, a heaven to me!"

Clarie's eyes filled.

"Don't mind what I say, Allie. It is all right, I know. The editor will be glad enough to take it. Why, some of the things one sees in magazines are perfect twaddle!"

"Yes, but nobody knows me," argued Alice, wistfully. "I have to let it stand on its merit alone."

"That's the beauty of it. You are a Great Unknown—the coming woman. People are always looking for the great American novel; one of these days they may be able to find the great American poem! Now, I'll tell your fortune. Let me see." She took Alice's little hand in hers and pretended, with a grave face, to trace out lines in the smooth palm. "Nothing but success! A straight road to fame! Why, here are letters and checks innumerable. The door to be besieged by editors begging for poems! Fame and fortune at your command! Lucky Alice! You know what the family oracle says: 'Alice is the wise one of the family.' I shall begin to think Miss Clem is uncommonly astute!"

"Don't!" begged Alice. "I never understood before what it was to pray for deliverance from one's friends—"

"Miss Gallatin," said Clarie, severely, "this is a clear case of conscience with me. I regret to observe your ingratitude."

"Dear me!" said Miss Clem, bustling in with May, "how pleasant it sounds to hear you girls chattering together again. As I came up the walk I said to myself that it was the only happy thing I had heard in weeks. Is there anything new? I hope it isn't a secret."

"Miss Clem," said Clarie, solemnly, "I was just telling Alice that you were the wisest woman that I ever knew."

"Why, Clarie! Clarie Gallatin! The idea of a compliment coming from you, when you have been inwardly laughing at me ever since you were born!"

And then she settled the soft old lace about her wrists, twisted her one solitary ring on her finger, and blushed with a pleased surprise like any young girl.

To think that Clarie should pay her a compliment. After all, perhaps, she *had* done her a little injustice occasionally. Harcourt was right; Clarie might be developing into a very fine girl!

CHAPTER IX.

FACING THE FOE

MISS CLEM had spoken the truth. Doctor Lovell did take. He was already a favorite in the village, and most of the ladies, young and old, married and single, had given him their hands unprofessionally, if not their pulses professionally, and concluded that it was a positive dispensation of Providence that he had been sent to fill Doctor Gallatin's place. For, fill the void he certainly had; even Clarie was obliged to acknowledge this bitter truth, and it made her feel more hard and unforgiving to the young physician than ever. It was not to be supposed that he understood Clarie's state of mind on this subject, although he must have felt in some degree her coldness; for, never since the night of her father's death had he entered the house. Indeed, he scarcely trusted himself to look toward it in his daily walks to and fro; the tall trees standing solemnly about it, seeming to him like so many sentinels guarding the sacredness of a lonely home.

He knew that he liked Clarie Gallatin very much;

that he admired her, and that in time he should love her, if she would let him ; but that he felt sure was not to be. He must go on with his work like other men, and forget it ; and then the path that he had laid out for himself could never be a lonely or unpleasant one. A vigorous, healthy mind like his, not overbalanced by love of self or gain, finds strength in making acquaintance with life, and learns to watch its personal development with interest. Dr. Lovell had plenty to do in thus caring for himself, but his isolation had never made him selfish. He had a heart to offer when the momentous occasion came ; the only thing that was needed was the occasion. And there was not only heart, but an odd sort of power, in the very simplicity of Lovell's character, which drew to him many friends, and among them none more staunch or true than the Reverend Harcourt Chantelling. Never were two men more unlike mentally and physically, so the friendship was only to be explained by that subtle law of antagonisms which seems to govern the world. Hardly a day passed that they did not see each other. If it were only for a moment, in passing, Dr. Lovell would drop in, or they would meet on the street, and both discover that they wanted to walk in the same direction ; or there would be the same sick person to

visit, or talk about—it really didn't matter what the thing was. There was always so much to think over, or talk over; but what surprised Dr. Lovell more than anything was the very little that the Reverend Harcourt had to say about the Gallatin girls. He knew that his friend saw more of Clarie than of any one, for it was not only their old friendship that drew them together, but there was the weekly practice of the chants and hymns, as well as the Sunday afternoon school at the old mill.

This school was one of the rector's plans that he had been longest in maturing and perfecting, and it had become one of his most beloved occupations. A Sunday-school for the mill hands—the young women and girls who all through the week worked in the tall, noisy mill, with its great rows of windows staring, like so many lidless eyes, year in and year out, upon the alternate changes of dust and heat, cold and snow, the only unsightly object in the pretty rural landscape. He had managed to establish his school by slow degrees, at first thinking it such an unlikely thing that he should succeed that he had undertaken it alone and unaided; but gradually he had imparted the intelligence to the Gallatin household, and Clarie had been the first one to give him assistance. It was just the thing that she liked to do. And she had never seemed so lovely or

womanly to the rector as when she stood among the gaudily-attired, bold-faced mill-girls, in her simple muslin dress, with her Bible and lessons in her ungloved, ringless hands, teaching them in a quiet, unaffected way, totally unlike the Clarie Gallatin whom he met every day, and who had never seemed so wholly herself as when she was caricaturing and mocking him relentlessly. She would be a beautiful character one day—and then the sensitive little man felt his womanish heart glow within him—one day she would be sweet and gentle and true as another woman, the one who was enshrined in his heart as a type of all that was perfect and true.

Clarie, too, seemed to know her friend better, and to realize more fully the absolute purity and beauty of his calling as they worked together. Every Sunday afternoon found her at her post, and she made very steady progress with the girls. By degrees the school grew. It was quite enough that a beautiful young lady—always dressed in the latest fashion, yet with a simplicity that surprised their untutored tastes—should be willing to come among them and give smiles with her kind, encouraging words. They had laughed and felt a little sheepish about going to Sunday-school at first, but they came to regard it as a great pleasure to be thus

taught. New pupils kept dropping in, until the mill-school, as it was called, might be considered a great success.

Doctor Lovell had heard of Clarice in this position of teacher and friend from almost every one but the Reverend Harcourt himself. It was really strange that he had never mentioned her name. Perhaps—and here the doctor caught himself following out the same train of thought that poor Miss Clem had injudiciously instituted—perhaps the Reverend Harcourt loved her; it really would not be so very unreasonable. But even the bare supposition cost the young man a pang, for which he rated himself soundly the next instant. What would Clarie Gallatin ever be to him, pray? though his whole soul had yearned for her ever since that night when she had thrown his hand from off her arm and called him “Cruel, cruel!” From every place where he went for many a long day, by every bedside that he tarried, he saw looking up at him two deep, violet eyes, fringed with long lashes heavy with tears that were too bitter to fall. How he had longed to see her once more to beg her to take back her cruel words, to tell her how vain is the skill of man in such a case! How he would put his whole heart into the telling! But what was he that she should care for him, even if she forgave

him? It would not be easy to say to Clarie Galatin all that he had been wanting to say for so many weeks; yet he was resolutely bent upon saying it, and to put an end to further doubt, he had determined to speak to her the first opportunity that offered. If it were possible, he wanted her to be his friend. He did not dare think of those eyes ever lighting up with joy at seeing him, of that young face bending down to his, or those proud lips smiling with joy when he was present; but if it could be so—and the very thought sent the blood tingling through his veins with a thrill altogether new to him; he would ask nothing more of fate—nothing more of life. Still he lingered over it, delaying a meeting from day to day, avoiding passing by the old house instinctively, and going to the rectory almost invariably when he knew none of the ladies from the other house were there.

But one night he saw her and she was coming to meet him, though she was not aware of it. The soft darkness of a warm September evening was beginning to close over earth and sky as she left the close, crowded room, and drank in with a feeling of infinite relief the balmy, delicious air. The trees were changing color; a few red and yellow leaves, looking newly dipped in sunshine, fluttered down as she went along, but she was so much absorbed

in her thoughts that she did not heed them. She was rather glad to have her thoughts to herself and walk home alone, the rector being obliged to remain with a sick child—the same child that Dr. Lovell was going to visit. He had already reached the wooden bridge spanning the river, and had stopped a moment to look at a long branch of flame-colored maple that bent over into the stream, when he heard footsteps and saw a slight, girlish figure in a black dress hurrying along the road, and knew it to be Clarie. Straightway, with pulses bounding faster than should be, he threw his cigar into the stream and waited for her to come up, with not a sign of this perturbation visible on his face.

She was upon the bridge before she discovered him. It was impossible for her to retrace her steps, and there was nothing left to do but go forward. She hoped he would not see her; if he did, she devoutly prayed he would not speak to her—and so, raising her head with a proud effort, she walked swiftly on.

As she came up to him, he raised his hat simply with a "good-evening," and a steady look out of his brown-gray eyes, which brought the color into her cheeks for a moment; then she bent her head in response to his bow, and swept on without raising her eyes.

The young doctor had paused to look at her without another word. Clarie looked more beautiful and more unapproachable than ever to him. She had been walking rapidly, and that gave her cheeks an unusual glow perhaps; her reddish gold hair was coiled in careless broad braids about her brow, partly covered by a black chip hat, low in the crown, with a floating veil twisted about it. Although her black dress was unrelieved by even a band of white about the throat, the severe simplicity of it was becoming. She was looking well, and she knew it, and when she dropped her eyes, it was with a thoroughly vexed feeling that Doctor Lovell might be admiring her too. If she had glanced at the man she would have seen another expression in his eyes—a something wistful and tender—something powerful enough to stir to the utmost the depths of his nature.

“I want you to say that you have forgiven me,” he said, with grave *brusquerie*, and in a voice that would have been pitiful and pleading but for the manliness underlying it.

Then Clarie turned to look at him, a deeper color rising to her cheeks, her eyes dilating, her pulses quickening. “I—I do not understand you; I have nothing to forgive,” she replied, coldly. “My sisters will be waiting for me. Good-evening.”

"One moment," he exclaimed eagerly, for he was strangely moved by this unexpected meeting "I wished to say more: I have thought so much about you—you must not think me impertinent, but I keep thinking of you all the time. My coming here,—indeed all the circumstances attending it have been fraught with so much unhappiness, and your bereavement following so closely upon my resolve to stay. You must know how I feel. I can not express it in words, but I shall not be happy until I have your assurance that you have forgiven me the wrong you did me in thought. For I did do all in my power to save your father's life. If there had been a thousand physicians here, they would have told you the same thing."

"Yes, I know," said Clarie, with a faint smile. "You must not ask my forgiveness. I must beg yours. I spoke cruelly, but my heart was ready to break. I—I am very glad to ask your pardon," she added with a proud sort of humility, as if, now that the disagreeable task were done, she would be rid of him forever.

"Thanks, thanks!" exclaimed the doctor warmly, extending his hand, and then dropping it to his side again when he saw no responsive movement. "But you must not blame yourself; I knew how you felt. I tried to forget your words, but they

have rung in my ears ever since they were uttered. For one thing, I could see that you disliked my coming here. I did not intend to stay after my first interview with your father."

"It is not necessary to explain your motives to me," replied Clarie a little frigidly.

"Please allow me to explain," he cried with a swelling heart, and with a sort of despairing entreaty in his voice. "I have so longed for this moment, and now I must speak. I do not want you to blame me too much. Everything went wrong from the beginning, but I can not, I can not think my coming here added such anxiety to your father's mind that it hastened his illness and death. Death must come to us all, and it would have come to him surely, and in just this way."

"I know," said Clarie, and then tears came into her eyes. She looked up at him through those mists of bitter moisture and asked: "Why do you tell me this?" with a sudden flush that was like anger—a certain vehemence of manner and tone peculiar to her.

"Because everything has seemed against me; that is, I have never been able to right myself in your eyes. From the first you have looked upon me as your natural enemy, and I have wanted you to be my friend. God knows I would have been

glad enough to have averted all the misery that has followed my coming, but I can not look upon myself as its author. I had told your father that I was not going to settle here. We talked it over the very first evening that I called upon him, but I think it was Mrs. Abury's influence that made me reverse that decision. Her child was ill, and she called me in to see him. You know we are old friends, that is, she is a friend of my friends, and we have always known a great deal of each other."

"Mrs. Abury is very nice," said Clarie, not trusting herself to say more, though her heart was hot with indignation against that self-satisfied matron. Nice? She hated nice people! She would rather die than be called "nice" by any one, she thought. These nice people had all gone over to the enemy, and her father, who had toiled among them all his life, was already well-nigh forgotten. Her heart swelled with the injustice of the world, its cruelty, its falsity, its utter hollowness, while the doctor went on:

"It was seeing her and talking with her that decided me. I told your father so, and he did not discourage me; and having no settled plans of my own, I concluded to stay. I have absolutely no ties, you know."

"I beg your pardon, I don't know," said Clarie, and then she laughed softly and flashed a look up at him under her long lashes, forgetting for the moment that this was the man against whom she had determined to wage hostilities for life, but who, in spite of her resistance, was fast overcoming that dislike. "Thank you very much for saying all this to me," she added, hurriedly, half angry with herself to feel that he was less her enemy than before this conversation. "I shall not forget it, but now it is getting late, and I must say good-evening."

"Don't go!" he cried, almost vehemently, his usually sombre eyes all aglow, the lines of his somewhat hard face relaxing as he spoke. "I wish to say more to you—I had been thinking—"

"Yes?" said Clarie, pausing in her retreat.

"I have been saying so much to you about myself, and yet not telling you really why I wanted to stay here. It seemed to me that all my life—spent in the whirl of big cities and in foreign places, now here, now there—was such an artificial existence, a sort of vegetation, even when I seemed to be gaining most, and having widest fields to glean among; and I wanted to get into some quiet spot and take hold of life—a true sort of life—and

live it earnestly and devotedly—to make my profession what it undeniably ought to be, a something better and truer than a mere profession. I would not dare tell you all my aspirations and longings about it, and how much more good I feel that I can do in a place like this than to lose myself in one of our busy thoroughfares.”

“I think I know what you mean,” replied Clarie. “Papa felt thus. No career which he could map out for himself seemed more beautiful or true.”

“And then—feeling thus—any place can be our home. You were laughing at me, Miss Gallatin, a moment since, because I was taking it for granted you knew I had no ties to hold me to any given spot,” said Doctor Lovell, for once in his life talking against time, though inwardly avowing himself an intolerable idiot for so doing; “and it brings to mind those quaint, homely lines of Donne’s upon the snail—do you know them? No? I think they run something this way, though I am free to confess I am not given to remembering or quoting poetry:

“ ‘Be thou thine own home and in thyself dwell.

Inn anywhere.

And seeing the snail which everywhere doth roam,

Carrying his own home still, still is at home.

Follow (for he is easy passed) this snail;

Be thine own palace or the world thy jail.’ ”

This wasn't at all the sort of thing that he had been planning to say to Clarie Gallatin for so many weeks; but then the things that we say and do in real life do not come and go with the same ease as the events of a dream. He had forgotten the nice little speech that he had thought committed to memory. His resources and artifices were exhausted. He had kept her standing too long already, forgetting in the absolute tumult of his thoughts that there was any world beyond the planks on which they were lingering, and the stretch of purpling sky arching above them.

"I think I had better go," said Clarie, feeling anxious to end the interview, and moving decidedly away. "My sisters will be wondering what has delayed me."

"But do you never allow yourself to be detained? I have heard of your visits sometimes among my patients when the school is over."

"But then I have the rector usually to go home with me."

"Yes; but there is really an hour of twilight yet, and why may I not see you safely to your own door, if the darkness does overtake us?"

"Because the rector and little Jem Goswald will both be wondering why you do not come to pay your promised visit, and because I infinitely prefer

walking home alone. No—I didn't mean to be rude—thank you very much, and good-night."

"I shall end by loving her," thought the young physician as he watched her retreating figure. "What a muff I was not to insist upon walking home with her. Chantelling would—or anybody else. How much pluck such quiet little fellows have. The rector wouldn't have given her a chance to refuse him."

Then he checked himself with an impatient gesture.

"She will never think of *you*, Ray Lovell," he said rebukingly.

CHAPTER X.

DEBBY.

LITTLE Jem Goswald, whom Doctor Lovell had been called in to see, was ill with fever again.

He was a freckle-faced, uninteresting lad of ten or thereabouts, employed in the mill as a bobbin-boy ever since he had been old enough to understand the use of his hands. His parents were dead, and the only relative he had in the world was a sister nearly twelve years older than he—a girl with that pathetic sort of face that one often finds among the very poor—a look as if she yearned for and wanted something more than her bare, unlovely life promised her. She, too, had worked in the mill from her early childhood, beginning as little Jem had begun, and finally working up to the loom. Her mother had worked thus before her, and so had her grandmother; they had been born and bred in noisy poverty; they had labored hard and fared ill; they had breathed an atmosphere that had been impure, morally and physically, and yet there was a certain latent gentleness and re-

finement that they had handed down to Debby as her only heritage, and perhaps it was this that had appealed to the heart of the sensitive little rector with a strength that could not be classed among mere emotions.

For one thing Debby was slightly deformed. That, in itself, made her an object of pity. Her girl companions had no delicacy in commenting upon this fact, and the young men stood aloof from her. When she first found out that she was unlike other girls, it made her bitter and hard, and the painful realities of the future, acting on her peculiarly intense nature, gave her a feeling of resentment against the world—aye, even against God himself sometimes. What had she done that He should be so cruel to her? Why had she been singled out? She read a verse in the Bible furtively sometimes, with a wistful pang in her heart, to have it made clear to her, that passage where God spoke the word, and fanned the breath of immortality into a flame, and man became a living soul—"in His own image created He him." And then again she asked what had she done that she had been thus singled out?

So, because she could not answer this question, and because, mingled with it, there grew that subtle sense of resentment, she neither used her Bible

nor cared for its teachings. Clearly it was not meant for such as she. When her mother died, and the rector of St. Michael's called upon her after the funeral, as he felt in duty bound to do, he found that she was just as much of a problem to him as she was to other people. With a deep sense of wrong somewhere, it was not possible for him to advance one step with her. Yet there was that in her face which told him to persevere. Now and then, in his unobtrusive way, he found some chance of doing her a good turn, but it was always done so quietly and simply that she was saved the humility of feeling herself placed under an obligation. To church she steadfastly refused to go, but when the plan of the mill-school was broached, to the surprise of everybody, and perhaps to none more than the rector himself, Debby added her name to the list of scholars, and, taking Jem by the hand, was one of the first to enter the room.

The Reverend Harcourt had taken heart at this. Open opposition was less baffling to him than cool indifference. In the one case he felt that he had something tangible to overcome, and it gave him a new impulse; in the other he could have no clew for action. And under all his seeming embarrassment of manner and his little weak doubts *of himself*, there was a shade of stubbornness that,

when he conquered grandly, Miss Clem was wont to call his firmness, and when he failed she willingly denominated as obstinacy.

The rector had been interested in Debby's face as well as in her pitiful history. It was no small thing for a young girl, with a delicate, misshapen frame, to sit by a noisy loom day after day and to care for a little baby brother at night; and this was what Debby had done ever since Jem had been two years old, and her mother had passed out of the whirl, and noise, and weariness of this life into the quiet and rest of that other and unknown one. Mr. Chantelling, with his whole soul in his work, had become very dear to the dying woman; but the subtle change that he slowly watched coming over the feeble, fading mind, had no seeming effect upon the deformed daughter. It is true she gave the Reverend Harcourt a sort of negative welcome, when he still persisted in coming to the house at every tangible excuse that offered, after the funeral. But he had a sensitive dread of intrusion, and mere visiting as a matter of parochial routine was a thing he could never lend himself to in any way. Thus he made very little headway with Debby Goswald. Sometimes she would see him, sometimes she would not. She was scarcely ever away from *little Jem, to whom she gave more of a mother's*

than sister's care ; and though, when she was forced into conversation, it was with a grave quiet that looked almost like grateful interest, he was uncomfortably conscious that she regarded him as a man who was watching his opportunity to force "religion," as the mill girls called it, on her.

Miss Clem was not the only one who felt the Reverend Harcourt's infirmities. Debby Goswald saw the little substratum of firmness, and christened it obstinacy too, setting her face like flint against it.

But when Jem was taken ill with fever, that melted the girl's heart and brought her metaphorically to the rector's feet. If Jem was taken away, that would be the last drop in her full cup. She wanted the rector's care, and she wanted his prayers ; if it had been good for her mother, it would be good for her, and the willful, proud heart of Debby grew soft as a little child's. This feeling gained strength as time went on, though there was a certain shamefacedness in her manner when she appeared at the school which Clarie's straightforward kindness had done much to subdue. In fact, Debby had learned to regard the young girl with a sort of idolatrous feeling ; a reverence for her beauty, her pretty, winning ways, her fascination of dress and manner, and that intangible charm

of sympathy which was diffused more than expressed.

When Jem got better she took him by the hand and led him to a seat by her side in the mill-school. Her companions laughed and whispered a little among themselves at this sudden change in Debby; but when they questioned her, she replied quite composedly that "she'd come for the very same reason that brought them there, and if they'd got anything to say for themselves, why, then, she'd hear it;" so after that they found there was less to laugh about than they had imagined.

As for Clarie, she had already been wanting to know something of the workings of life in the lower social strata—to get at their ways of thinking and living, and, with a keen feeling of how hard it must be to watch the prosperity of others from that stand-point, she set about her task.

No one was afraid of her, and no one disliked her. The solemn-eyed, bald-headed babies that were brought out for her inspection sometimes were not afraid of her either; and even the boys, playing marbles in the side streets, never stared at her with cool impertinence, but gave her—first as the doctor's daughter, and afterward as the "teacher"—a world of deference in their way.

"Awful pretty!" and "My eye, aint she a

beauty!" were about the worst encomiums that she ever heard passed upon herself; for Clarie very often caught their opinions, never uttered in a very low tone of voice, though she assumed a moderate amount of deafness.

So the rector's stubborn purpose, and Clarie's little artifices, and the pleasure that the mill-school gave her, all tended to make it an easy thing for Debby to appear one Sunday evening at St. Michael's, again with Jem by the hand, both slinking into a seat near the door. No one turned to look at her, and on her part she seemed to see nobody but the rector, upon whom her eyes were fastened all through the service. And he—when he stood up before the congregation—for the first time in many years, saw something besides May Gallatin's earnest, thoughtful eyes fixed on his. They looked past and beyond her to the wistful face of the mill girl, staring out from under the shadow of the arches, and he spoke with a power and a pathos that fairly made him tremble. He put aside the elaborately-prepared sermon for that night. He forgot the social status of the unexceptionable congregation before him; he forgot the silks, the laces, the fine attire; he forgot all but one immortal soul, hungry for the bread of life,

and he preached to that soul of nothing but the Cross and the love of the Crucified.

Miss Clem, who had peeped at the finely-written discourse, enclosed in the velvet cover which she had fashioned for him with her own hands, looked up amazed at the change of text as well as the pathos and pleading in his voice ; and Mrs. Abury awoke from a very complacent reverie to wonder how a man with such clear ideas of advance could descend to such an undeniably Methodistical style of oratory. She *did* delight in Mr. Chantelling usually ; but—really now, when he reflected that he was preaching to those who had been declared regenerate at baptism—really he was presuming a little, wasn't he?—trenching upon the dignity of the Church, as it were, when he called upon them to prostrate themselves at the foot of the cross. That was the sort of thing to do on Ash-Wednesday, and other appointed services during Lent ; there being a prescribed method for repentance which every sound Churchman usually understood. And at other seasons—that is, ordinarily—the Church never called her regenerate children such very startling names as lost sinners. It was positively six months to Lent, and why Mr. Chantelling should burst out after such an unwar-

rantable fashion was a puzzle. There were no perishing souls within the pure walls of St. Michael's! She determined to talk it over with Mr. Abury that very night before she went to bed. He was the senior warden, and really he ought to know about such matters, or else he had no business to be in that position. A senior warden, according to Mrs. Abury's way of thinking, occupied a relative position to the Church only to be compared with that of Lord Beaconsfield to Parliament, or Bismarck's firm foothold with the Kaiser. And Mrs. Abury buttoned the third button of her primrose glove, sighed deeply, and rested complacently in the reflection that *she* had taken her confirmation vows upon herself when she was barely twelve years of age. Mr. Chantelling surely could say nothing to *her* after that!

When the service was ended, the rector, walking home slowly, alone, with hands crossed behind him and head bent in thought, was surprised to encounter Debby lingering at the rectory gate. He put out his hand with a glad impulse, but waited for her to speak, though his heart was still beating quick and his pulse throbbing with intense emotion.

"I waited," she said tremulously, "to see you. I have only a minute to stop. I let Jem go on alone.

I couldn't rest till I told you. I never troubled myself with Bible-reading much; there was always a verse that was coming up and blotting every other one out, and I felt bitter and hard about it. But I've been all wrong; and it's you—you and Miss Clarice—as made me see it. And I listened to you to-night; oh! I listened with my whole soul, Mr Chantelling—the words breaking from her with a sort of cry—"and I've made up my mind."

There was a mist before the little rector's eyes, and for a moment he could not see. But if he could not see he could speak, and he found words to say, words of boldness and truth, the very words that the newly-awakened soul had been longing to hear uttered.

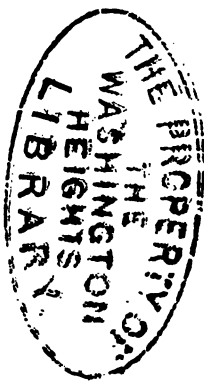
And Debby went home that night for the first time in her life comforted.

But the Rev. Harcourt had a great deal of trouble for the remainder of the evening with his vision; and Miss Clem, watching him with her most affectionate air of solicitude, believed that it was a very bad thing for him to wear such exceedingly strong glasses.

"I always did detest that last new pair, Harcourt, my dear," she rambled on. "Just because they have such thin little steel rims the oculist seemed determined to put more strength in the

glass, the law of compensation, I suppose; but you are the one who has to suffer for it; your eyes are quite red, I declare. And oh, Harcourt, I do think nice gold spectacles would look so *much* better! Why, when I ~~was~~ a girl, the poorest person in the land had thick-rimmed silver ones; and what *would* our grandfather—dear, sainted soul—have said if he could have looked forward to you, a clergyman, with a little rim of steel that looks like a needleful of black silk over your nose? Harcourt, I don't believe you heard a word that I said; now, did you?

"A man is a provoking creature!" sighed the estimable lady. "I am certain that he never heard a word."



CHAPTER XI.

PEGASUS IN HARNESS.

MAY GALLATIN'S problems had been very hard to solve ever since the beginning of September.

A strange hush and silence had come into her life. The great blow had fallen, but its reverberations had ceased, and the echoes were still. She was glad to stay on peacefully in the old home, where everything spoke to her in the sweet language of memory; but it was a curious thing to settle down to, this new life of theirs. The library, which had been such a cheery gathering-place for the family, was now a dining-room, and the old dining-room and office were turned into school-rooms. Rows of neat desks took the place of the familiar furniture, the library-table was spread with maps and drawing-materials, and Clarie, gravely seated in one of the office-chairs, tried to put her heart-aches away and forget the dear presence that had once pervaded the place. She taught her pupils with erect head and firmly-pressed lips, but May and Alice both noticed how bright and dry

her eyes were, and what a hot flush of pain there was on her cheeks. If they only could have chosen any other room! but then, "Where was the use?" Clarie asked wearily, when May proposed the drawing-room. In trouble, alas! "there is no royal road."

So Clarie never complained, but went about performing every duty with a swelling heart and that air of proud defiance that she had worn from the very first. The school duties all fell upon May and Clarie, Alice having something evidently of more importance on her mind. It puzzled May often to guess what it could be, and whether her cheerfulness was real, or assumed only to cover a certain restlessness and anxiety quite unusual to one of her calm nature.

People looked on very quietly and said the Galatins had been *so* sensible. It was so much better to make the best of a bad thing, and it was greatly to their credit, *et cetera, et cetera*. And as for sympathy, why, they had a perfect flood of it at first; but after the school was fairly started it seemed quite the natural thing to stand aloof and let the three girls help themselves. Friends did not turn away from them—that would be too cruel an act to lay at the door of the dear world's friendship. In these days of enlightenment and progress it is

considered a false theory to offer the cold shoulder to those brave women who seek to carve out their own living. No matter what the practice may prove to be in the end, the theory remains one of the prettiest little theories to bandy sentiment over, all the same. And, after the family friends had offered their sympathy, they were quite ready to stand aside. Perhaps we ought to be grateful if we are left alone under such circumstances. If all the ingredients of a needed, but loathsome medicine are mingled in the same draught we are not able to distinguish the full and revolting taste of each; so when the loss was two-fold, and death and poverty, hand-in-hand, walked into the old home and took up their abode with the sisters, it was just as easy to bear as if friends had remained in plenty. Clarie thought the poverty was a blessing. It gave them something to think about, and even that was a grain of comfort.

And so the girls gave themselves to calculations and accounts that were dreary and fatiguing enough to them. They were all young and untried, and it was a new and overwhelming thing to find that after a few weeks there was no money. May took her accounts resolutely into the drawing-room and begged Miss Clem to inspect them with her, one day when the school was over. May's eyes were very red and

heavy, and there was no denying that there had been tears in them a good many times that day.

Alice joined the family conclave, but quite humbly, as if she really had no suggestions to make, and seated herself by the window dreamily enough, leaning her head on her hand and letting her eyes wander away from May's account-books out into the garden beyond, where the bright autumn flowers were glowing in the afternoon sunshine. She was thinking of the tiger-lilies, and calling them, in her heart, "stately Arabian women," in a vague effort to recall some little lines which she remembered now with a wistful yearning that she might thus immortalize a flower, a leaf, a tree, in that way. Oh, if her poem were only accepted! Then May need not try her poor eyes any more over those miserable housekeeping books. She would be sure to have a brain and fingers that never wearied penning the sweetest songs! Why didn't everybody write, when the world was full of such beauty, and there was so much, so much to say? She was sure she should never hesitate for words; no, the thoughts were all in her heart; all they tarried for was the summons to bring them forth. Clearly Alice was living in another world, for she could not fathom the depth of despair which sounded in May's voice.

"We shall have to give up the two servants, I fear, Miss Clem, and content ourselves with one and with the school. Why, there are eighteen scholars already, you know—more than I dreamed we could have; but of course there will be no pay until the quarter is over, and the money—where is the money coming from, do you suppose? If we go on as we are doing we shall soon come to the end of everything. A big house, and, now that Michael is gone, all that waste of land," waving her hand toward the garden.

"Waste?" cried Alice, waking out of her reverie, "why, it is full to overflowing! Where are your eyes, dear?"

"Full of trees, grass, flowers, and sunshine, you silly child! There isn't anything to eat—that is, of any consequence."

"You will turn cannibal next and devour us all," smiled Alice serenely.

"But how to live," pondered May, knitting her brows. "A great garden with nothing useful in it but a little fruit and some berries, and we—five of us—wanting to eat three times a day. We can't do it; we might as well try to fly. And, Miss Clem, *something* must be done."

"That is very true," sighed Miss Clem, turning her head on one side and giving an oracular look

out of her faded eyes. "Of course, my dear, under such circumstances there is only one thing to be done. But then," she added less briskly, "I don't know what that thing is, do you? Perhaps Harcourt might tell us. We'll ask him, and perhaps it would be as well to let one servant go. I am sure you will be able to manage; and then you receive no company now."

"Oh, we can get along very nicely with one servant," cried Clarie, who had come in very quietly, with her bonnet and sacque on, and a German book and roll of music in her hand. "I am young and strong, and, dear Miss Clem, I haven't half work enough to do; not enough to keep me busy, as I want to be, from morning until night. Don't let that little frown stay between your brows, May, dear; if I hadn't been the youngest I should have advised letting Bridget go weeks ago. She was always horrid!" cried Clarie, seeking desperately for some charge to hurl at the unoffending girl's door, and so have the felicity of relieving her mind, for she had a cold, shuddering presentiment that she had brought bad news to Alice.

She had been to the post-office and found a yellow-enveloped, business-looking letter, with the address of a popular magazine stamped on one side; and, weighing it in her calculating little hand, she

had come to the conclusion that it was much too thick to contain a simple note of thanks and a check for a munificent sum. She kept it in her pocket, with her fingers closed tightly over it, longing to show it to Alice and yet dreading the shock. Alice looked so peaceful and pensive in her black muslin, with a little frill of white about the throat, and her slender hands, all unused to work, folded together idly in her lap. She wished she would look up, for she was in a hurry to go out and give two or three lessons. Miss Clem would be sure to ask all about the letter, and Alice was so sensitive; besides, it was a secret which her sister had confided to her; she had no right to tell it before all the others.

But Alice, after one glance at Clarie, had turned her eyes out upon the garden walk, where tall, white clumps of chrysanthemums were clustering. She was still thinking of the "lilies, tiger-lilies," in that other poem which had touched her heart so long ago, and unconsciously she began rhyming to herself:

"Down the prim, old-fashioned border,
Tall and fair they stand;
Like a band of snowy maidens,
Clasping snowy hands."

That would do for a beginning, she was sure, and she would not be "pirating"—wasn't that what

they called it?—no, not in the least. To be sure, she never would have thought of the chrysanthemums but for the memory of the tiger-lilies. The poet's thoughts had suggested other thoughts to her; but that was just like the civilities of the world ordinarily—a mere interchange of sentiment, as it were—and perhaps her chrysanthemums would be just as acceptable to the general public as somebody else's tiger-lilies, and that would be the name she would give it, and this should be the first line, and she began rehearsing to herself:

“Down the prim, old-fashioned border.”

“Alice,” whispered Clarie, bending over and speaking hurriedly, “see, I'll put something in the hat-stand drawer for you as I go out. I must give my lessons, or I'd stay and talk it over with you; and May dear, Miss Clem will advise you and find a sure way out of all your difficulties, I am certain.”

But poor May was too full of cares to see the humor and futility of the suggestion, and Clarie went on, “And there is always the rector; I am sure I couldn't *live* without him.”

But at the undisguised fervor of this speech poor Miss Clem fairly ground her teeth in agony. She had seen such evident signs of perfect sympathy

between her brother and Clarie all along, and this mill-school had only tended to strengthen the bond. Oh! really it was a shame to Alice that she did not insist upon taking a class too. "Alice, dear," she began; but Alice and Clarie had both vanished, and she and May were left alone to counsel and plan.

"May," she said, putting both hands on her young friend's shoulder, and compelling her to look into her face; "yes, I was sure of it; there have been tears in your eyes all along. Don't cry, dear. I am sure some way will be opened, and we are not poor. Harcourt and I can do without many things, and we can let you have some money, I am sure. I will speak to him about it this very night."

"Dear Miss Clem," said May, "we want work, not charity, though I thank you and love you all the same. We might accept a temporary loan until the school had become a paying thing, but that is all I would consent to do, and I will not do even that unless Mr. Chantelling gives his approval of the step"

"Oh, but he will be sure to do that. Why, May, he acts in the strangest way. He wanted me long ago to offer you money; you know I had so much put aside when I was to have been mar-

ried; my dear father never would let me touch it while he was alive, and when Harcourt was old enough to understand, he made me do the same thing. Now there's that money doing no one good, and oh! May, it is something like my wedding-dress—folded up and put away and good for nothing. And I don't believe God intends such things to be, any more with money than wedding-dresses. Why, my love, some day I want to show you that dress. Such a funny little waist, and all piped and corded, and the satin—well, it is yellow enough now, but it cost eight and sixpence the yard, and very dear it was for those times.”

“Yes,” said May, gently patting the soft old hand that trembled within hers. “Oh, how I thank you for all your kindness.”

“Never mind the kindness, my dear. Of course you can have the money—the money is nothing. But sometimes, May, I have wondered if I would have been different—any happier, any better, for instance—if I had worn that wedding-dress.”

“May,” said Alice, opening the door softly and coming up to her side, “May, I have let you talk and plan all the morning, but I have never said a word about what I can do; but, Miss Clem, you will speak for me—you will persuade May that I can do a great deal.”

"Yes, dear," said Miss Clem, looking up at Alice with pride in her eyes. "You can do more than any one of them if you only have the will. I have always said it. I have always told Harcourt you were the wise one of the family after all."

Alice had dropped down on the carpet by May's side; her cheeks were flushed and there was a pathetic trembling about her mouth. "I have tried to help every way that I could, but I am not wise—I am not wise. Oh, Miss Clem, I have been so silly and vain and presuming all along, but now I am going to help. I can keep the house beautifully, May, and Bridget can go to-morrow if she likes. There is the mending, and the linen, and the silver to see to, and all the dusting, and the marketing, and the lamps. Only see what a load it will be off your mind. And then I can take the class in botany. It was always my weakness, flowers," remembering with a pang how she had fondly immortalized the chrysanthemums on the garden path a few moments before. "I shall be sure to be successful in teaching that. And oh, May, after a time I shall learn to do; only try me, dear; let me have work—ever so much of it—to do. That is all I wish now."

"Why, Allie! Allie!" said May, putting her cool, firm fingers on the young girl's head. "What

is the matter with our placid little Allie, to-day? What has gone wrong?"

"Nothing has gone wrong; it has all come right," she said, bravely forcing back the tears and looking up at both May and Miss Clem with a smile that had something pitiful, despite its bravery, in it. "Nothing has happened except that I want to bear my share of the burden now. I have been an idler too long."

And so Alice, with her own hands, fastened the harness upon herself, and looked forward to nothing but long days of drudgery and toil; a heavy yoke from which her very soul had revolted only a short time before, but which now she was glad to bend her neck to receive. Anything to rid her of her silly dreams! But oh, why couldn't she have said something so sweet and compelling that all the world would have been glad to stop and listen?

When Clarie came home, tired and flushed with giving two music and one German lesson, she looked in vain for either of her sisters. "Miss May was at the annex," Bridget informed her. "She had gone over with some books and papers, and she had not seen her since, and tea was all ready and waiting; should she go and call Miss May?"

"To be sure," Clarie answered, and then walked on up to her own room. Her sister's door was open, and a candle burning on the toilet table.

"Clarie, is that you?" cried a voice that seemed half smothered in pillows.

"Yes, it is; but your room is in total darkness, and it is past the tea hour."

"I don't care for tea, I am afraid I don't care for much of anything now! Come in, do, where I can touch you. I'm on the bed. Oh, Clarie, the letter was such a disappointment!"

"I was afraid so, dear. There! Don't think any more about it. I am afraid they are an ill-conditioned lot, those editors. I hope he didn't say anything rude."

"Rude? Here is the worst part of it; he never said a word! It is a little printed slip—'The editor returns with thanks the enclosed MSS. to Miss —, and regrets his inability to accept it,' etc. Oh! it is all very polite, I assure you."

"What a shame!" cried Clarie flushing; "he might have acknowledged it was pretty."

"Oh, no; he couldn't say that, for then he would have been obliged to give some very odd excuse for not taking it; if he granted it was pretty, why should he refuse it? and, Clarie dear, I'm afraid it was very poor stuff."

"It was nothing of the kind!" cried Clarie, hotly; "it was very sweet. You know I said as much when you read it to me. The only thing I disliked was that there seemed to be a sort of lie about it; but dear me! there need be no such fear about a lie, or anything else for that matter, if that is the cool treatment poems receive. I would not mind; *you* know it was good."

"But, the money—oh! I wanted the money almost as much as I wanted the glory of it; and—I wish I didn't feel it so—but my heart aches almost as much as if I had lost some very, very dear old love, so dear that it has almost broken in the losing."

There was a stifled sob among the pillows, and the face that Clarie bent down to kiss was wet with tears.

"You can sing your songs to yourself, darling, and to me, and I will always listen; and perhaps one of these days, others will be glad, too, to hear. Think how much richer you are than I am, even in your disappointment. I couldn't write a poem, even if I would—not a line! It is the dullest, coldest prose I have got to live out; but you, Allie, can turn everything into a poem if you choose; why, your own life can be one long, perfect lyric. That is what you dreamers have for your consolation."

"But I shall dream no more after this," replied Allie, sadly. "I am going to work at all sorts of humdrum things in real earnest. I begin to think that life is a sort of lottery, in which every one may put in her hand and draw out joys or sorrows—whichever chances to come first—only it is astonishing how many blanks and how few prizes there happen to be!"

"And I am the one that will always be pulling out the blanks," laughed Clarie, "it never will be you. Come down-stairs and have a cup of tea. You'll live to have that editor ask your pardon yet."

CHAPTER XII.

CLARIE CHANGES HER MIND.

CLARIE GALLATIN certainly led a very busy life. Whatever failing she may have had in the past, she could hardly be accused of self-indulgence, now that the positive needs of the family had been demonstrated. What with school, and music, and German lessons out of school, she had very little time to waste in yearnings for that which had fled or that which might come.

Happiness had once seemed to her such a cheap and natural thing to have; now it was a Will-o'-the-wisp; a vague, intangible dream; a something that had vanished out of her life and left nothing more than a faint memory. And work was such a barrier to dreaming—such an antidote for pain! The rector looked at her with a feeling in his heart that there was more of Clarie than even he had predicted, and Miss Clem went so far as to confess that certainly Clarie Gallatin was *developing*. She saw very little of her young companions, and, except at a class that she had started for German read-

ing, she rarely entered the houses which heretofore had always been so ready to open to her. It was very seldom that she met Doctor Lovell, although he could scarcely be included among those who stood aloof from the Gallatins. He had embraced every possible opportunity of meeting her; he was continually framing excuses to himself for passing the other house, hoping thereby to catch a glimpse of her. He longed to know more about her, to see what her occupations were; but he did not dare enter the house unbidden. Even Miss Gallatin, who was now the head of the family, had never invited him to call after that one sad night of watching and death. But he made every excuse, in visiting his patients, to drive or walk past her abode; and in the evenings he would pace up and down under the shadow of the huge, dark trees, laughing himself to very scorn for doing it; and yet feeling it such a consolation to watch the light in the drawing-room window. It seemed such a boyish thing for a grave man of the world to do—so like the pseudo-hero of a dime novel romance; and yet it was an impulse he could or would not resist. Sometimes the curtain would be parted and the shade undrawn, and he could see Miss Clem quite plainly handling her bright-colored wools under the soft light of the lamp, or using her

eye-glasses with great effect to accentuate some important theory she was aiding to develop. And there, too, would be the rector, walking backward and forward, with arms folded behind him, engaged in quiet talk, and perhaps Clarie would be sitting in the open window, her head bowed upon her hands, and her whole attitude betokening the deepest thought or the deepest dejection; which could it be?

The lamp became a sort of beacon light to him, and unconsciously he gave himself the habit of looking for it. He used to wonder what the sisters were doing, and, with a memory of the only evening that he had spent in the long drawing-room, he saw Clarie always in the large easy-chair, with its covering of rich red that set off her trim little head just as the dark leaves set off the graceful, swaying white lily they enfold. And once he met her coming out of the rectory gate, just as he, after some vain subterfuge, had made up his mind to go in; but she gave him such a mere formal bow of recognition, he could not feel that he had made many advances toward friendship.

She was walking alone one bright afternoon, seeking some repose after the dull, fatiguing routine of lessons, and, lost in thought, rambled farther than usual on her way to Mill Bridge. The road

was little more than a leafy lane following the course of the river, that meandered among the green meadows as if it had nothing to do but lose itself in the most careless manner in the most enticing possible places. This was a favorite walk of Clarie's. Tall elms and drooping willows enclosed it like a green wall on one side, the turfy river bank shut it in on the other. The boundary of her rambles was usually Debby Goswald's cottage, where Jem was slowly convalescing after his long siege of fever; but her dread of meeting Dr. Lovell had been so intense that she had rather neglected the boy latterly. The young physician's visits, she had found out, were most unaccountably irregular. If she saw Jem in the morning, he was sure for a week after to time his visits with reference to hers; and if she waited until afternoon, she was just as certain that he would discontinue the morning call. So it came to be a sort of trial between them of the strategic capabilities of both—a trial in which Clarie usually came off victor, sweeping by the doctor with a swift, frigid inclination, remotely suggestive of polar temperature, just when he thought that an interview could not possibly be avoided. "It was more than provoking," she thought, "these stray meetings;" and it made her a little neglectful of Jem, when she found that

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she could not avoid them—a fact that the child was not slow to repeat to the rector.

“Jem has been asking for you again, Clarie,” said the Reverend Harcourt; “he is very much hurt at your neglect.”

“I am so sorry,” remarked Clarie, innocently. “It is all Miss Abury’s fault; but I shall go and see him to-morrow without fail.”

And, after school was over, and her lesson with Miss Abury ended, she filled a basket with soft, green moss and all the late gorgeous autumn flowers that she could find, and started for Debby’s cottage. But she lingered a little over it, wandering through the lane, picking a few ferns here and there to add to her collection, and then going on to the bridge, to fold her arms over the rail and look down into the clear water gurgling over the loose stones, at the same time watching every avenue of approach to Debby’s cottage.

It was all very still and peaceful, and no signs of life about the place. Evidently the doctor had paid his visit, and that thought decided her. She would go and sit with Jem. Why should she make a studied avoidance of one man her sole aim and object of life? She heard nothing as she passed swiftly in through the open door of the cottage, and paused for a moment with her hand on the latch of

Jem's door. When he had been in health, he had shared Debby's bed in the loft up-stairs ; but the air was so stifling, and Dr. Lovell had so peremptorily insisted upon proper ventilation and as much breathing space as the narrow limits of the house could give, that Debby had brought him down into her sitting-room, and placed the bed in a corner near the window. When Clarie lifted the latch softly and went up to the low cot, she found Jem just closing his eyes to sleep. He opened them to look at her and give a faint smile of recognition.

"I thought you'd forgotten all about me," he whispered. "I missed you so awful bad."

"Oh ! I am sorry, Jem ; but it is nice to be missed, too. Close your eyes, dear, and have the sleep that I have interrupted, and I'll sit here by you until you wake up. But don't you want your pillow turned first ?"

"Oh, if you please," sighed Jem, looking up with sleepy eyes at the pretty figure bending over him. "Are them flowers for me ?"

"All of them ; and I'll put them on this chair, where you can pull them over, and arrange them yourself when I am gone."

She lifted Jem's head tenderly while she arranged the pillows, then sat down, and with her cool, soft fingers brushed the boy's hair from his

forehead, until his eyes closed and he was lost in dreams.

The little fellow had been very ill, and the freckled, sunburnt face was now so wan and thin, it gave one the impression of a sort of ethereal, spiritualized bobbin-boy in Jem's place. All through the worst of the fever Debby had nursed him; but now that he was in a fair way of recovery, she felt forced to go back to her loom, and leave her brother to the friendly care of the neighbors through the day. The child required very little, and most of the time would lie in a sort of dreamy calm, saying nothing and wanting nothing; but when his sister came home, hurried and flushed, he would put his thin arms about her neck and whisper out the things he had been pondering over alone. He liked Doctor Lovell and the rector, and always brightened visibly when they came in. Of Clarie he had been a little shy at first, but he finally informed Debby he liked her best of all.

"Her eyes are so big and shiny, Deb," he imparted in confidence, "and she looks at a feller as if she didn't think of nothing else in the world. She likes me, and I her." And so Debby smiled, and was always glad to see him under Miss Clarie's care.

He slept very quietly for a long time. The room

was quite still, except for Jem's soft breathing and the distant whirr of the looms sounding over the river. The sun was setting in thick, red gold clouds, and purpling shadows were already stealing in the little, low-ceiled room, when Clarie thought she heard the approach of some one along the road, and almost instinctively felt it to be Dr. Lovell. He had a ringing, firm step, which she seemed to know by intuition. She was sitting in the window close by Jem's bed, his head resting very quietly against her shoulder. She did not dare move and disturb the sleeping child, and there was nothing to do but sit still and face the enemy again. She gave a petulant sigh of annoyance as she turned her eyes out of the window. The doctor had been smoking and singing a little German song to himself as he came up the path. He stood upon the grass outside a moment to throw away his cigar and take off his hat for a little look around, and she could hear him humming in a rich, deep voice,

“ Tabak ist mein Leben,
Dem hab' ich mich ergeben; ;
Tabak ist meine Lust.
Und eh' ich ihn sollt' lassen,
Viel lieber wollt' ich ha-sen,
Ja, hassen selbst eines Mädchen's Kuss.”

Clarie smiled scornfully as she listened. She

expected nothing better than such sentiments from Dr. Lovell. So much for his foreign education !

"*Ergeben, ergeben,*" he repeated as he tapped at the door; then, without waiting for permission entered, hat still in hand, with his habitual air of grave courtesy.

"Hush!" said Clarie, raising a warning finger. "Doctor Lovell, your patient is asleep."

He had been so engrossed in thought that he did not notice the young girl, and now, as she spoke, he turned toward her and saw what in after years he never forgot. She sat with her clear, white face toward the light, her finger lifted in warning, her mouth scarcely parting with a still, cold smile. Beneath the brim of her straw hat, loose fair hair waved over the level brows, and the dark-fringed violet eyes looked coldly at him, as much as to say, "You are an intruder." There was no sunshine to light up the sombre drapery about her; the sky was full of purple gloom, making strange shadows already in the room, framing her still figure within the recessed window with all the fugitive, intangible charm of an old Flemish picture. The young man felt the glamour of her presence and beauty like one who has been poring over a poem, losing himself in it until it has become, as it were, a part of himself. He could hardly define the feeling, but he mur-

mured some indistinct words of pleasure, holding out his hand, which she received this time, though with evident reluctance. Her own face was rosy in the twilight, and he could see it, she was certain. It was the very first time that she had blushed at meeting him. She was vexed with herself for it, and her very vexation made her address him with something like friendliness.

"I have been putting Jem to sleep," she whispered, "and now you must come again, or—or wait until he wakes up," she added, with her eyes cast down.

"I shall certainly wait," replied the doctor, speaking in just as low a tone.

There was a moment's silence, during which Clarie thought what a very odd sensation prejudice was. And then she half admitted that there was not so much to dislike in Doctor Lovell after all. She couldn't *like* him—in fact, she never should—but it was childish and silly to give one's self over to open prejudice. And what was it all about? He really had as good a right as any one else to settle in Briarly, if he liked it; but—the world was so wide. And why had he taken this little by-path to walk in when he might have driven his chariot along the king's highway had he chosen? Then, with a brief spasm of pain, she remembered her father's words,

"Try and treat Lovell more politely next time; I like him, remember." Yes, she would descend from her pedestal and talk with him—just for once. They could never have a single sentiment in common, she commented loftily; but perhaps she had been unjust, and she was not so narrow-minded that she could not afford to be generous, once in a way, even with a sworn enemy. And so she looked up, a little gleam of mirth stealing across her statuesque face.

"I can not allow you to stand, since I am the temporary hostess. Our friend Debby is like *Thoreau*; you know he had three chairs, 'one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society;' will you take the third, since I and my flowers occupy the other two?"

The doctor bowed as he sat down by *Clarie's* side. Their faces were very near each other, their eyes meeting, his arresting hers mysteriously.

"Were you reading to our little friend?" he asked with a rather spasmodic attempt to establish conversation upon an easy, impersonal footing at once, and glancing down at the book which she had laid upon the bed.

"Oh, no; I have been giving *Miss Abury* a lesson. You know I am a woman of business now; and *Miss Abury* reads German constantly since her

engagement. They are going abroad for a year or more, and you know it is quite necessary, under such circumstances, to understand Goethe," with another little upward glance of mirth in her eyes. "But I fear we are in deep waters; I can not always understand him, can you?"

Doctor Lovell picked up the book and saw it was the "Wilhelm Meister."

"I do not wonder," looking down at the uplifted face. "Pardon me, but you are too young, for one thing; such a book must grow with your growth; it must be read as a life is lived, not crowding it all in a day or a year. Why, that is its very theme—the growth of a human soul—the typical history of a life of love. I speak as a man and an American, remember. The German mind naturally would grasp it sooner."

"Then you could never quarrel with me for not comprehending Goethe! An American and a woman"—with an irresistible attempt at caricature—"would naturally feel utterly befogged in the labyrinths of his spiritual physiology; and I don't like an ideal life to begin with."

"I don't call Wilhelm's life an ideal one," said the doctor, as gravely as if intent on some pathological disquisition. "It is a simple enough child-life at the beginning; rather too full of elaborate

and trivial detail at first, but the child grows fast."

"And then he develops idealism—ah! Dr. Lovell, you need not deny it—and it has been enough of a sorrow to me that people who try to lead ideal lives must always find out that they can never attain to them in this world."

"True; but by keeping the ideal ever before us we may reach a higher standard, perhaps, than those who have no conception of it."

"But not the ideal in a Goethean sense. He is lofty and noble, and much more religious—at least, so my dear father taught me—than the popular idea makes him; but I think his ideas are too great for me, I can not follow him," half sadly, as if a deep source of regret were involved in the failure.

What a sweet face it was looking into his! and then he drew a long breath at the thought which had gone through him, so sharp and sudden he did not know whether it were excess of pleasure or excess of pain.

"But why do you read Goethe then?" interrogated the doctor, with a sense of delight in prolonging the conversation. "Could you not select something more suited to your years and taste?"

“Mr. Harrison wishes his future wife to dip into something more intellectual than Adler or Otto. She is quite a proficient already in asking for ‘the golden candlestick of the good tailor,’ or ‘the pretty ribbon of the pretty dog,’ colloquialisms which will be of great value to her in a foreign land.” She was looking up mischievously. “I hope you realize my position, Doctor Lovell; do not forget that I am a school-mistress now.”

There was a little pause, a trying pause to Clarie; a painful one to the young physician, who saw something in her face besides the forced gayety. She had grown paler, and thinner too, since he had seen her last, and when he spoke it was in his direct way, but with an emotion that surprised her.

“You are not well, Miss Gallatin; you are very pale. Forgive me, but I fear that life has been a solemn problem to you lately. You are not well or happy.”

It was impossible for her not to feel the kindness in his voice. It touched her, and gave her a momentary, phantasmal feeling that there was something in this man after all that was not thoroughly disagreeable; a feeling that she could hardly have analyzed, though it forced tears into her eyes, and made her little, low laugh sound as if there were a sob in it as she echoed his “Happy?”

I do not know that I shall ever be happy again, Dr. Lovell—it all seems like a dream to me—and—I am weak yet, you see,” she ended with a quivering voice.

“I wish I could do something for you,” he said softly, the yearning to help and comfort her growing in him painfully.

“Miss Clarie, are you there?” said a feeble little voice from the bed.

Clarie started. She had forgotten all about Jem; she had forgotten that it was getting late, and that she had been idling away a good half-hour with her sworn enemy; and the sworn enemy had forgotten it too! How long Jem had been awake they could not imagine, but both started consciously and bent over the child. He had his flowers spread out before him, his thin, white fingers touching and selecting them tenderly.

“And how is my little patient to-night?” asked the doctor, bending down to look at the large, eager eyes lifted to his.

“Better. She brought me them flowers—aint they stunners? Show them to him, Miss Clarie, please; they’re all for me. You’re both so good,” turning his head languidly.

Clarie put her arm under the child’s shoulders, lifting him gently and putting a cool pillow under

his head, the doctor looking on approvingly. "There were so few women who could do such a thing well," he commented inwardly.

"He is really better?" she asked, with a conscious feeling that her question must seem a hollow device to the doctor.

"Oh, yes;" in a low voice. "It is only weakness we have to combat now, the fever is broken."

And then Clarie took up her basket, bent over Jem to say good-night and that she really must go now. To her surprise Dr. Lovell followed her to the door.

"There is no necessity for my remaining," he explained. "The six o'clock bells are ringing, and Debby will be here very soon. Ah! there she is now, coming along the lane. How that brother and sister love each other. There is something fiercely maternal in that girl's nature—a sort of thing you'd expect to see in a lioness guarding her young. It is all a mistake, Miss Gallatin, to think that love must have a certain intellectual tinge to make soul-fellowship perfect. Sometimes we find it enclosed in the thickest husks of ignorance—just the purest, most tender love in the world. It is a rare bit of sunshine to me when I do find it, as I have here, Miss Gallatin."

"Yes, Debby's is a strong nature. Mr. Chantel-

ling calls her heroic—I do not know. He argues that all mankind are equal—I suppose, taken from a certain elevation they may be—and it does seem hard that true family love can only be found among the cultivated. Those are subtleties I don't understand, Dr. Lovell, but Miss Clem is forever quarreling with the rector about it."

"I like Mr. Chantelling. I think I never knew a man that I liked better."

He spoke warmly, and he could not fail to see the sudden glow of color which lit Clarie's face as he spoke. "Miss Clem is right," he thought with a pang; "she loves the rector. I might have known how it would be." But he stopped to shake hands with Debby, and give a few directions about Jem's medicine, with not a sign of perturbation on his dark, earnest face, and then walked silently along by Clarie's side down to the bridge. There they paused a moment to look and listen. The purple clouds were shut out from sight by the rocks and hills that had grown gray and sharp in the gathering twilight; but on either side of the bridge there was a green, golden vista of trees and shrubs, opening before them like a pathway into some beautiful enchanted land. Down in the water, dark and still, the cows were standing solemnly, waiting to be driven home; and all

about, against the dark, green background, plumes of late golden-rod were nodding and shining, with white spires of daisies and meadow blooms interlaced, and the lights and shadows flickered to and fro, the leaves stirring softly with a rhythmic rustle in the wind. The air was delicious, the sense of peace profound.

"This is a perfect pastoral—an idyl," said the young physician, watching with deepening interest the sudden light in Clarie's eyes, the sudden flush of color on her cheek.

"Yes; wasn't it Madame de Sevigné who first called the autumnal days *crystalline*? It was such a perfect idea. I always think of it, and I love a late, gorgeous October better than any month in the year. There is room for body and soul to reach out and breathe on such a day as this. I used to wonder why you could come to a little out-of-the-way country town and bury yourself, but I don't wonder any longer; it is like having a little piece of a world all to yourself—your own separate landscape; and the best of it is, nobody can take it away from you. I think you were wise to escape a town, Dr. Lovell."

"I think I was very wise," he said simply.

They were under the tall trees and close to the home gate before Dr. Lovell spoke again.

"Won't you let me come in and see you some evening, Miss Gallatin?" he asked. "I want to come as a friend. Will you shake hands with me to-night and forget that we have ever been—anything but friends?" he added.

Clarice lifted her eyes slowly to his as she placed her white fingers in his strong, broad palm.

"I would like very much to be your friend," she said quietly. "I am sorry—sorry that I ever thought of you in any other way."

"Confession is good for the soul, Clarie Gallatin," she commented inwardly as she paced slowly up the garden path. "I hope Esculapius *will* feel better now. I certainly do."

CHAPTER XIII.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

DOCTOR LOVELL walked straight across the street, through the rectory gate, and into the library, with the air of a privileged friend. Miss Clem had taken Alice for a drive in her low phaeton, with the fat, gray pony,—that looked like an overgrown, asthmatic Maltese cat, and just about as frisky,—and the rector sat alone in his library. He was poring near-sightedly over a sermon, with a book of reference open before him; but Doctor Lovell made no apology for interrupting him, indeed he did not hesitate to say, without any preliminaries, “Do put away your pen for a moment, my dear fellow; I must have a little quiet chat with you this evening, and for once I want the pleasure of disturbing you. I feel like having a gossip; that’s a woman’s mission, I believe, but then it is about a woman,” going directly to the point, in his usual way.

The rector closed his book, wiped his pen carefully, smoothed out the loose sheets upon which he had been scribbling, and leaned back in his

chair with a smile and a nod, as much as to say "I am a victim ; proceed."

"In the first place," the young doctor went on balancing himself on the arm of a chair, and looking directly down upon his friend with that affectionate, elder-brother sort of air that was now quite common to see, "I want to thrust my confidence upon you, and, in the second place, I want to demand yours. I have a kind of confession to make—you don't object to the confessional, do you? I—I half believe I am in love, only it sounds so very sentimental to say so, and I feel anything but sentimental over it. It has been growing steadily ever since I came to Briarly, ever since the first evening I spent with her. It is an honest, manly love, of which I am not ashamed ; but I want to see my way clearly before I go any farther, and I want to be certain that I am not interfering with you."

The Reverend Harcourt flushed crimson even to his delicate forehead, and Doctor Lovell saw it in an instant.

"I am not sure," he faltered ; "I am not sure that she can tolerate me as a friend. I think the whole family have felt in some mysterious way that I was the cause, directly or indirectly, of their father's death."

"You are speaking of Miss Gallatin?" said the rector faintly, his whole soul hanging on the doctor's answer.

The young man looked down at him keenly. "I have thought that perhaps you cared for her yourself—don't think that I am intruding upon your privacy—but it was your own sister led me to think of it, and, tell me the truth, Chantelling—I think you must feel I have a right to ask this of you."

"I did not think Clem would have guessed—I did not know that there was a soul on earth who could read my heart thus," and then the rector bowed his face upon his hands for a brief moment.

It had been a hard question to ask of a man who loves the same woman, but Mr. Chantelling did not hesitate to answer it. He lifted his head and laid his feminine hand in the strong, outstretched palm of his friend.

"Lovell, I do love her with my whole heart. I have loved her all my life, but she does not know it, and she shall never know it now. I have given myself to God and His Church. I shall be content. Win her and wear her if you can."

The doctor looked down with a grave smile. "You are as tender as a woman, Chantelling, and—and almost as heroic."

But it wasn't a heroic figure or face, and the rec-

tor, in his well-worn, carefully brushed study-coat, looked like anything on earth but a martyr. "And," he began again, "that is not quite all I want to say. When a man like you loves truly and honestly, I think it is something more than a mere sentiment or emotion—it exalts it to the grandest, highest thing of which a man is capable, and nothing should lead to its sacrifice—not even the friendship which we in common hold sacred, and which now, whether you win or lose, I never can do without. God bless you and her too. I who love her can say it!" Then, after a minute's pause, he looked up with a half smile, "And now, Lovell, I think I shall have to finish my sermon."

At the very same time Miss Clem and Alice were jogging along the country road, Miss Clem, as usual, propounding questions and Alice answering. This time her catechism was an entirely new one. For the first ten minutes she paid attention to nothing but the pony. That interesting quadruped was not unlike his mistress in the two qualities of age and eccentricity. Infantile to a degree under certain conditions, he was decidedly opposed to anything but a funereal pace when first taken from the stable. It had become her settled habit to devote the first part of her drive to remonstrance on this evil trait, accentuating her remarks with delicate touches of

the whip, and it was just as much the settled habit of the pony to pay no attention to the thing until his mistress paused from sheer exhaustion · then he pricked up his ears, rolled one eye back at her, and ambled off at a fine pace, which he resolutely kept up until he reached home again. “Crotchety as a woman,” Dr. Gallatin used to say, when Miss Clem complained. “You’ve taught him all he ever knew, and it is too late to make a fuss about it now.” Alice thought of it as they dragged slowly along by the river bank. It did seem as if the two had grown up together and imbibed each other’s opinions; certainly Miss Clem liked her own way as well as the pony liked his. By and by, when he took up his little obliging trot, the exhausted woman dropped the reins in her lap, leaned back, took a long breath, and began :

“It is so tiresome, Alice, and he *is* just like a woman, as your poor dear papa used to say. And just when I’ve been dying to get you off by myself and have such a long talk, where nobody can put in a word, and we can just settle it all in our own way, and I *do* think so much of your judgment, Alice.”

“Oh, Miss Clem!” and Alice blushed like a rose. “If you wanted advice you had much better have asked May.”

"I ask whom I choose," said Miss Clem, with her vivacious little air of generalship, "and I think more of your opinion about it, Alice, than of any one else in the world."

"You are so good," murmured the young girl. 'I don't deserve it at all, but I will try and answer you as judiciously as I can.'

"It is only this," and Miss Clem adjusted her reins and then looked Alice full in the face. "It is about Harcourt and his getting married."

"Mr. Chantelling! oh, I hope not!" cried Alice; but she did not blush this time. "Miss Clem, I think, unless he really loves her very, very much—that is—I mean he is very much nicer as he is."

"Loves her! of whom are you talking, child? That is just why I am finding fault. He don't love anybody, and he won't, and yet Mrs. Abury and Mrs. Lewis, and indeed the whole parish, are determined he shall be married."

"That settles it at once," said Alice; "but who is the young lady, pray?"

"Ah! now you embarrass me, my dear. There are so many to choose from in a parish like St. Michael's."

"And the parish would always be saying she was the very one whom he ought not to have chosen, though she should prove to be a saint. I think, if I

were a clergyman, I should go at least a thousand miles away and take an entire stranger."

"Oh, Alice!" said Miss Clem in a hurt voice, with a little strangle of a sob in it. "I did think, *you* would care!"

"And I think I am caring," answered Alice promptly. "It would be a positive calamity to the Gallatin household to have the rector marry. We want him all to ourselves ever and ever so much longer. It would beggar us beyond description, dear Miss Clem—but for you—oh! I do think a nice sister-in-law would be the very thing you would like!"

Miss Clem groaned. "If *I* could choose her," she said solemnly. "If I could choose her; but I know Harcourt would laugh in my face at the bare proposition, and as for the parish, why, *it* would think she should be selected by a standing committee."

Alice laughed a little quiet laugh, but Miss Clem went on with a good deal of dignity. "There is very little to laugh about, my dear; at least you would think so, if you were one of the parties concerned."

"I do not think I should care."

"Of course you would not at first; but you don't know what a parish is. Old Mrs. Brewerton's cen-

tennial prize yeast is nothing to it. Mrs. Abury goes around in her carriage and calls here and there, and looks wise, and nods her flowers, and sighs over the folly of the world, and says: 'The poor dear rector, and that poor superannuated Miss Clem!' Oh! yes; you need not shake your head; that is what they all say of me; but you must not think I care, my love. I never pay the slightest attention to it. If I had married, you know, it would be quite a different thing. It is just because I never happened to wear that wedding-dress. Dear! dear! what trifles go to make up our lives, to be sure! And then Mr. Lewis, who has two marriageable daughters, says, 'The church wants building up, and if Mr. Chantelling had the right kind of wife, we wouldn't know St. Michael's in two years.' I am sure we wouldn't if Jane Lewis sat in the rector's pew. Why, Alice, my love, just take fifty hungry cats, and shut them all in one little room, and then let loose one rat among them—I don't care how big or fine a rat it may be when he goes in, there wouldn't be a scrap left of him in five minutes to tell the tale."

"And Mr. Chantelling is the rat?" said Alice.

"A very fine one," nodding oracularly; "and he's going to be eaten up as sure as fate. Mrs. Abury and Mrs. Lewis are quite determined about it."

"Well," said Alice, "it is a poor battledore and shuttlecock sort of existence in any case. I don't see why there should be such a fight for it. Tossed about from one to the other—up at the top of the parish favor, or down on the ground in the twinkling of an eye—to be everybody's cheerful drudge, and never desire any reward beyond the satisfaction of having done her own duty and other people's too. Let Jane Lewis have it, Miss Clem, dear, if *you* can stand it."

"Stand it? I don't propose to do anything of the kind, child! Jane Lewis indeed! And pray what do you think Harcourt would say?" And Miss Clem violated all established rules by giving the pony what he was pleased to consider a very vicious cut with the whip. It took a minute or two to restore that placid animal's equanimity, during which Miss Clem thought bitterly how she had gone to work, and with her own hands demolished the castle she had been all the summer building. What had possessed her to tell Alice what a miserable lot it was to be the wife of a clergyman? She might better have wasted her breath upon Jane Lewis. But Miss Clem was an undaunted commander-in-chief. If she had failed in strategy, she would boldly come forward and sketch out her campaign openly.

"My dear Alice," she began, "of all people in the world I think you are the one most qualified to be a clergyman's wife."

"Me?" and Alice looked up with a puzzled air of surprise. "Oh, no, Miss Clem; in the first place, I know no clergyman."

"Except Harcourt," Miss Clem interpolated eagerly.

"Yes; and he is just like a dear, dear brother, you know. I don't believe any other clergyman *could* be half so good. And then I shall never marry. I have quite made up my mind."

"Never marry? Oh!" burst out Miss Clem, "don't say that. Just look at me!"

"That is just what I have been doing all my life, and I see the dearest, sweetest, best—"

Tears rushed to the old lady's eyes. "Don't say it, my love—don't, don't! Why should you who are so young, and with life all before you, deliberately choose to be alone?"

"But I shall not be alone. There will always be May, and perhaps Clarie. I don't believe we shall any of us want to marry, even if any one asked us. We'd all have to go together in a body, and take the annex, with you and Mr. Chantelling in it besides—I don't want him to marry. I wish that we could always stay just as we are."

"Alice!" said Miss Clem, with as much of a tragic air as she could command, "with all your sweetness and common-sense, are you just going to bury yourself in that school, and in household drudgery for life? Shall you never weary of it or repine? And I know—I know you had dreams."

"Yes, I have had my dreams," the color creeping into her fair cheeks; "dreams that I was going to be a great woman, and carve out a name and position for myself. I awoke from that pretty quickly, dear Miss Clem; but I never, never in my wildest flights of fancy, dreamed of being a clergyman's wife."

Miss Clem gave a long sigh. "Perhaps you might do worse than be an old maid," she said, pensively. "I saw the gentleman whom I expected once to marry, years and years after, when Harcourt and I were on a little trip to Niagara. He had his wife and two daughters with him, and he had grown bald, and oh! so stout; and he tapped his cane on the floor when he spoke to his wife, and called her 'Jemima' in such a way that I am sure if it had been me I should have fainted dead away on the spot. It has always seemed to me that three little raps with a cane meant 'Jemima' ever since. Well, I never was sorry that I put away my wedding-dress instead of

wearing it! Such a pretty dress! all piped and corded."

And Alice said, "Yes, dear," and patted the soft old hand that held the loose reins, and then silence, as sweet and perfect as the twilight, settled upon them both.

They were crossing the long bridge, and Alice leaned over the phaeton side and looked down at the still, calm river without saying a word. There was a little skiff with two figures in it, a boy and a girl. He had idly dropped his oars, and she was trailing one hand in the water and singing a little song. It floated up to her through the soft, dewy air, and made it seem even more peaceful and beautiful with this touch of sentiment to brighten it. On the bridge two boys were swinging bare legs over the stream, as they counted up the fish they had caught that afternoon. Miss Clem drew rein to speak to them, and Alice saw, with dreamy eyes, how a little flock of sparrows flew before them, then came back again and settled over something, quarrelling, chattering, and scolding among themselves. By and by, one bigger and stronger than the others carried it away. It was nothing but a worm. She smiled softly to herself when she thought of the words, "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?" Why should she not be

content with her lot? The birds were fed—how or why she did not know; but God cared for them tenderly, and so He would always care for her. It was such a lovely world—so full of peace and beauty—and it seemed such a good place for everybody, of course it would be for her. She remembered once reading that each one carves out his life for himself, and God blessed the patient hands that toiled to chisel out the way; but it was sweeter, far sweeter, to think that the hand of the great High-Priest himself had fashioned the temple and then stooped to call it His own. With a smile Alice accepted her lot. It might not be what she herself would have chosen; but if God cared for and remembered her, she was willing to give up her little dreams and be led by Him. How could Miss Clem think her life would be lonely? Alice was sure, sure it never could be.

Miss Clem was very silent too, as they drove slowly up the broad street under the dark trees.

“Jane Lewis, indeed!” she said to herself as she deposited Alice at her own door. “If Alice won’t have him, nobody else shall. I’ll keep him myself! we shall see what the parish will say to that!”

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS CLEM RELIEVES HER MIND.

THE girls were all sitting together in the empty school-room, folding their hands and resting with that luxury of repose that is so perfect, and only to be appreciated after a day of toil, when Miss Clem burst in upon them. She bore a bowl of cream, with a Dover egg-beater in it, holding it aloft as if it were a sort of chalice, and she passing through some form of invocation, though in fact she had only run over to whisk up a dish of syllabub for little Jem Goswald; but then Miss Clem's methods were always after a manner inspirational. Her cheeks were a little more flushed than usual, and her eyes were quite bright as she drew an arm-chair close to Alice, spread a napkin over her black dress, and began to spatter her cream and ideas simultaneously.

"Such nonsense is taught in schools nowadays, my dears," she said, nodding all round with that sweeping generalization peculiar to her. "I really couldn't stand it any longer, to hear Harcourt, a

sober-minded clergyman, and Dr. Lovell, talking the rankest infidelity. Oh! you needn't smile; I assure you it is quite true. There's all sorts and kinds of infidelity. Some believe in too much, and others in too little. The idea of one whisking around at the rate of nineteen miles a second! It makes my head spin to think of it. And if it's really true, I don't wonder there's so many giddy, light-headed people in the world. Just think of it, my dears—eleven hundred miles a minute! You know I never heard of such things when I was young; why, I was taught in school:

“ ‘The earth is round, and like a ball,
Seems swinging in the air.’ ”

And now it's an oblate spheroid, and I don't know what more besides. I suppose it has an axis yet—one can't tell, though. And what's all this talk about Saturn losing his ring? Why, I've never lost mine that my sainted mother gave me the day I was sixteen, and why should Saturn go about losing his, and making a point of losing it, too, every fifteen years; and where does he go to pick it up again, I'd like to know? It's clear shiftlessness, that's what it is; and I wanted to ask, May dear, if you were going to teach such nonsense in your nice little orderly school?”

May smiled and said, "Dear Miss Clem, Alice has obliged me so very much in taking the astronomy class in hand; she knows far more than I about it, and it was always one of her favorite studies. You know papa was very careful about her reading."

"Then," said Miss Clem, vigorously plying her egg-beater, "Alice, you will please tell me all about it. Does Saturn really lose his ring and find it again every fifteen years?"

"I believe he does, Miss Clem," Alice replied demurely.

"Then I am not only extremely disappointed in Saturn, but in you," and Miss Clem's tones deepened to a little severity. "I grieve to repeat, in you, Alice, too. I have very little interest, I am free to confess, in Saturn, but I have so much in you—so very much in you—and you have disappointed me in more ways than one lately."

"I am so sorry," and Alice put out her hand softly, with a sort of touching appeal in it, and laid it on Miss Clem's sleeve; but the old lady, for once in her life, was slow to notice it.

"You know," she went on, "how bitterly I grieved over your decision the day we took that long ride. That hurt me more than anything that has happened in years." And Miss Clem flourished

the egg-beater wildly, and got more froth on her nose and limp curls than in her bowl, and then she handed it over suddenly to Clarie, and said, "There! finish it, do; and eat it if you like. I don't care what you do with it. I never could make it decently!"

Clarie laughed, stirred the cream gently, and said soothingly, "Miss Clem, dear, I wouldn't do anything that made me tired and nervous. Just sit still and rest, and then we'll eat the cream if you say so."

"But I promised Doctor Lovell Jem should have it for his tea, and I'm going to drive over in the phaeton. Clarie, if you'll finish it, I'll take you along, indeed I will; only I don't want any more nonsense to-night; I am quite upset now."

There was silence for a moment, only broken by the sound of Clarie's energetic work, and then Alice said, "Won't you please tell me, Miss Clem, what you meant? I can not imagine what decision you referred to. I try to please you in everything, and I am so grieved to have caused you any annoyance."

"Oh, Alice! and I put all my heart into it too! and you *wouldn't*—you know you said you *couldn't*—be a minister's wife."

"Has old Mr. Popphauser offered his heart and

hand to our sister Alice?" cried Clarie, dropping the egg-beater.

"Old Mr. Pophausen! What are you all talking about?" questioned May, looking first from one to the other.

"I certainly was not referring to Mr. Pophausen," said Miss Clem with stately gravity. "He would scarcely be thinking of a wife now in his declining years; besides, he has had the melancholy pleasure of burying three. One might have a surfeit of even wives, I should think; and then, he has had one foot in the grave for the last two years."

"Yes, but I thought he might pull it out again," argued Clarie. "People have been known to do such things before—that is—widowers."

"I was not talking of widowers," and Miss Clem's cheeks flushed. "I can not understand or be understood to-day. I was sorry Alice did not feel like marrying a young man and a clergyman."

"But who has invited her?" persisted Clarie.

"It wasn't an invitation; it was a supposition."

"Oh, I don't care what you call it. I want to know the name of my future brother-in-law."

Alice blushed crimson. "I don't know what it means," she faltered. "Nobody has ever asked me to marry. I never thought of such a thing. And, dear Miss Clem, I don't want to talk of pos-

sibilities until they at least assume the shape of probabilities."

"But depend upon it, Alice dear, nobody will ever ask you if you steadfastly retain the opinions you expressed to me the other day. There isn't a man in the country but would face the cannon's mouth sooner than 'No' from a pretty girl. Why, there's the doctor now; don't you think him clever, and intellectual, and all that sort of thing, Clarie?"

"I suppose so," granted Clarie; "but not to that severe degree that one need feel overpowered by his presence or opinions."

"Well, you ought to hear the things he says to Harcourt, and—oh! I grieve to say it—the things that Harcourt says to him. They are not always talking as they were to-day, about the earth's motion, the planets, perpetual occultation or the aberration of light. Intellect would seem to me a good substitute for light, but then I never pretend to understand. But I know very well when they are talking about ladies and marriage what they both think, though I will confess, listen all I may, I never am quite able to make out who it is they are talking about. And Doctor Lovell, though he is so strong, seems to be frightened to death at the idea of a woman rejecting him. And

there is Harcourt—in some way he has become imbued with that monkish idea that most young clergymen of the present day drift into, of giving up all earthly love, devoting himself to the Church and to celibacy. Just as if God would love him any better because he hadn't a wife, and everything comfortable. And I'm afraid Doctor Lovell is one of the same sort. I heard him talking to Harcourt one day when they thought I was out of hearing; and the way Harcourt spoke about giving her up and she never knowing it, just set my teeth on edge. I declare, I believe they have a secret between them, and, whatever it may be, it makes them the dearest friends in the world. They are like two women together, but they are neither of them happy; and I am sure, quite sure, you have all noticed how miserable my poor brother has been looking lately," pausing to take breath and glance reproachfully at Alice.

Yes, the girls had noticed the worn look which of late had deepened on the rector's face. Miss Clem had steadily exerted herself to efface it; but still it was there. The Rev. Harcourt had some mental anxiety, and Dr. Lovell shared it. There was a touch of fine sympathy between them, and the two men understood each other thoroughly.

Women would have talked it over; these two pressed each other's hands and were silent.

It is a hard way. Perhaps it isn't though—for a man.

It was only the other day, Clarie remembered, that she put her hand upon the rector's arm and asked abruptly, "Have you any trouble?" looking full into as much of his eyes as could be seen behind the mist of glasses; "and I wish when I ask one of my direct questions, you'd take those things off."

The grave, delicate face, almost too delicate for a man, was turned toward her, and she had noticed the flush that swept over it, and how the head was averted uneasily. Yet he answered her, "I am only a man—a weak, ungrateful one—or I would never confess I had a trouble; but hold ourselves in check as strongly as we may sometimes, we want, we long for, things it may not be right for us to have."

"I wish I could say something to comfort you," she said, wistfully. And then he held out his hand, clasped hers gratefully, and went away.

That was quite all, and yet Clarie remembered it, listening to Miss Clem's fragmentary talk, with a half pang in her heart that the rector, in a hope-

less sort of way, must love some one else besides the one whom she had dedicated to him years ago. Miss Clem was still vibrating between love and astronomy, anxiety for Harcourt and displeasure with her pet Alice; but her words conveyed only a slight sense of amusement to Clarie, who was floating miles away from them all in an idle and speculative dream, which she scarcely dared define, except in the vaguest possible manner to herself. Dr. Lovell had changed them all. Even the rector now—was it any wonder that she found it hard to be his friend?—and yet she had promised, and had given her hand to seal that promise, only an evening or two before.

“I wish Dr. Lovell and the rector were both—” She looked up at May, caught her eye, and something that she saw there checked the words that hung on her lips.

“I was going to say—that is—I wasn’t going to say a thing—” hastily rising and looking out of the window. “What a glorious evening it is going to be for a ride. The cream is done; and quite perfect, isn’t it? Now let us go and take our drive, and see how Jem will like it. It is rather ungrateful though, Miss Clem, not to give us a little taste all round.”

“Hush!” cried May, “what noise is that?”

She walked to the window and threw it open. There was a clamor of distant voices, and then a bell began to toll. It was a quiet, peaceful village, and the rapid, resolute clang of the bell was an unusual sound to hear.

"It is a fire!" gasped Miss Clem. "If I had needed anything to finish me completely, after this most trying day, nothing more effective than a fire could have been selected. I only hope it is not the church."

They all ran up-stairs to look out of the front windows, and Miss Clem heaved a sigh of exquisite relief when she saw the square gray tower of St. Michael's, unharmed by fire, sharply defined against the sky. But was that a mist rising over the trees on the other side of the river? Surely no mist ever hung so still and concentrated over one spot. Presently a dark cloud of smoke rose and covered the mist like a pall, then a dull, red flame leaped in the air like a vast torch flaring in the wind.

"It is over the river, by the bridge, close to the mill. Debby's cottage perhaps; and, oh! poor little Jem!" they all cried together, and then Miss Clem caught up her shawl.

"Let the cream go, Clarie," she called out. "That will keep, but we must drive straight down to Debby's. If it's a fire, we shall have our hands full with little Jem."

CHAPTER XV.

FIRE !

WHEN Debby Goswald sat down to her loom in the dull gray of an autumn morning, it was with a weary sort of questioning that her heart had been a stranger to ever since that night when Mr. Chantelling had preached to her. She worked mechanically, as one who is pursued by pain—a pain that threatened to pierce her soul should she pause to think. When the noon bells rang and she went home to Jem, she had not been able to eat any dinner, though the poor child, weak still from the effects of fever, placed silently before her the tempting jelly which May Gallatin's housewifely hands had moulded for him. She loathed the dainty food, and, now that she was back at her spools again, with the smell of oil and wool, and the whirl of wheels above her head, she was beginning to feel sick and faint with something else besides hunger.

Debby was passing through a new experience—an experience of which she had never dreamed. She was not yet what people perhaps would call a

Christian, nor was she a mere worldling or scoffer, as she had been before; but she was ignorant in the Christian life, and without the knowledge that there is an ignorance which is the first stage of wisdom. For one blissful moment she had known what it was to plant her feet upon the heights; but she did not dream that there were depths to which she must descend and traverse before she could begin the patient, slow climbing again. She stood just where myriads of men and women, as weak and ignorant as she, stood when Christ came down to save them. And she was seeking this Nazarene very much as the woman of Canaan did who came out of the coasts more than eighteen hundred years ago, vaguely wondering if He would hearken to her prayer, and crying, "Have mercy upon me, Thou Son of David." Many a troubled soul since that day has asked the same question, waiting for the hand of the great Healer to touch them and say again the words, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Debby was waiting for the same touch; turning her sightless eyes toward Him, yet feeling through it all that the darkness was never more intense than now. Her soul had been starved so long! She wanted so much, and she knew absolutely nothing. She had never been certain about any-

thing, except the mill and things there. Heaven, when the rector had talked to her of it, seemed like a fairy tale to a child—something very beautiful, but very far off; and his conclusions she could not accept until she had made them her own by experience.

“I was so happy,” she thought, passionately. “I had asked God again and again to show me my work, and I thought He had shown it to me.”

For the first time since she had known Jem would get well, tears rushed into her eyes and rolled between her fingers unheeded. The old loathing of herself came back to her to-day. Life seemed to be a sort of wrong done her, instead of a blessed, immortal gift. Her very growth and enjoyment of all that was good and beautiful made her see how poor her chances had been, and what a blank the wheel of fortune had thrown out to her. She began to look back over her dwarfed infancy, the heavy years of grinding poverty, the slow, constant longings, and the just as slow constant pain. There was no hope that it would ever end. It was God, God himself, who had placed in her soul this fierce thirst for beauty, and then given her a frame distorted and blasted—a life utterly purposeless and lonely. That was God’s work, not man’s; and could she expect man to be more merciful than

He?—her whole soul starting up in a mad cry of rage against this injustice, this maiming of her life.

Debby had never been a favorite in the mill. She felt by instinct how even the finer nature of the coarse beings around her revolted at her deformity, perhaps even when their words were kindest. Her silent, morbid ways told against her too; and yet, if they could have looked beneath that surface, they would have found a wild, passionate craving for love and sympathy, a heart full of heroic unselfishness, which she wasted with lavish prodigality upon the only human being who belonged to her in the world—the little freckled-faced bobbin-boy, Jem.

As the afternoon waned and deepened, her head ached, and a sense of oppression overcame her. Then a numbness followed the sharp pain—the roused intellect became dull again. There hung about the place a heavy, unclean odor, that made her head ache, and the chatter and laugh of the girls grated harshly on her ears. Sometimes her hand dropped by her side, and it seemed to her she would suffocate.

“It’s awful warm here to-day. ’Pears to me I never suffered more them hot days in summer,” remarked Deb’s neighbor, a quiet, black-haired girl, glancing up quickly at the white face, and then

bending her eyes upon her work again, for Deb had only nodded assent. She was quite incapable of speaking, and ached from exhaustion with so many weary hours at the spools.

Two or three girls stopped to chat in a pause of work, and she caught herself listening. One was exhibiting, with much pride, a gayly-braided jacket.

"There's going to be a little dance to-night over to Jinny's—just a dozen or so—you'd best come."

"Nothing to wear," replied the owner of a stuff gown that looked poor enough by the side of the smart jacket.

"Oh, never mind the clothes. We'll have fun just the same. You'll come, won't you?"

"No, I won't," turning away.

"You're so stingy! I don't see any sense in hoarding up your wages."

"I don't hoard them up. I have to support my sick mother and help clothe the children; and it's precious little goes in finery for me. I don't care though—I don't want to go to your dances anyway."

Two or three pairs of hands were stretched out to pull her back, and then there was a little scornful laugh.

"You've never been since the parson started his school. I reckon you're going to turn pious too, like Deb here."

"I won't come," said the girl, shortly.

And Debby, who felt their eyes turning upon her now, bent over her work, pressing her lips closely together. She knew very well none of them would ask her. Why, she had never danced a step in her life, not even as a child. It was rather late in the day for her to begin.

"Awful hot!" said one of the girls again, fanning herself with her handkerchief. "I can't breathe. What upon earth is the matter? I don't see what should make such a smoke, girls."

"It's near night. Time to quit work. You've been horrid slow to-day, Jinny. I've helped you lots, you know I have."

So they worked and talked inside the loom room, while outside, just below the staircase, a still small voice was trying to make itself heard. It began with the softest whisper—just a flutter of a sound—then it died away, and everything was still again. But it could not rest. It kept on fluttering and whispering, and by and by it darted out a long, fiery tongue, and tried a sharp, sibilant hiss; but no one heard. The planks began to crackle and start, and the cry, as of a dumb spirit in pain, grew louder, clearer, fiercer. Then it broke loose, made a sudden spring, writhing and twisting like a baleful fiery serpent about the old stairs. Again and again

it leaped high ; then a huge volume of smoke rolled up and filled the space above. The whisper had become a cry, the cry a roar of something more terrible than the steady click of machinery above ; and still the men and women worked on. The one with a braided jacket, fanning herself by Deb's side, was the first to comprehend it.

"I say there *is* something the matter, girls," her face blanching a little. "Look at all that smoke. Run, run, for your lives ! the mill is on fire !" staring around with dazed eyes, and then wringing her hands as she flew down the narrow space between the looms.

In an instant there was a knot of women at the door fiercely fighting to be the first out ; but they drew back, looking down into a black gulf in place of a landing. One man knelt down, groining with his hand as far as he could reach. He grasped the wooden rail, though he could not see it. In another moment he had twisted his handkerchief about his face and disappeared. Some of the bobbin-boys and girls followed him ; others drew back, blackened, half blind, and staggered to the windows, leaping out to certain death. Each one was fighting for life, inch by inch ; each only thought of self. Fire had shut them in a prison, and death, it seemed, alone could be the jailor to

set them free. There were wild cries of "Try the windows! Jump! Don't let's die here like rats in a hole! Listen! listen! there'll be help coming soon," for through the open casements came the steady chime of bells, all the bells in the village clanging fiercely together, the rattle of engines, the shrieks and hoarse shouts of those who were helping outside. It had seemed only a second since the room had been instinct with work and life, and now there was nothing but the broken throb of the machinery and the sobs of two helpless girls. The little one in the stuff gown, who had to hand her hard earnings over to her sick mother and the children, came and sat down by Deb's side, and for a while they said nothing.

"It is horrible!" she whispered at length with a low, shuddering cry. "Do you think it means death?"

"I think it does for me," said Debby, mechanically. "You might try the window. I—I'm not like you."

"No, poor soul!" and she broke out crying. "If we could only tie our skirts together, and make a rope—it isn't so high from the windows—but it would kill us if we fell. Kitty jumped. I stood right by and saw her; but she lay so still, just where she fell. I don't dare try that."

She went to the window, then came back, tearing off her woolen skirt. "Help me," she said, her teeth chattering, her fingers trembling, "help me tear it in strips! I'll fasten it to the window and drop down. You can come too, after me."

In the first horror of surprise Debby had remained rooted to the spot as if she were stone; now she bent herself to the task of helping save this girl, perhaps afterward herself.

But when the red flame, flashing into a glory of crimson, burst through and rioted among the ribs and rafters of the low-ceiled room, there was nothing there but the dying, panting life of the looms, and one crouching, hunchbacked girl. She was leaning from the window struggling for breath; but she did not look down now on the sea of faces below her. She had watched the frail woolen rope part the moment the weight of the girl had tested it. It dangled idly from the sill; once her hand touched it, but she drew back shuddering, thinking, with a slow, dumb horror, that this was the last look she would ever take from that window. How strange it would be to shut her eyes and never see the world, or Jem—poor little Jem—again.

Have you never had rare moments when a sudden light flashed over your brain, and you saw clearly, in one fleeting instant, what it has taken

years and years to imprint and leave behind as a memory? People who have been saved from drowning can tell all about it; how through all the agony of such a death the memories of a lifetime leap before the closing eyes. In that one brief pang of waiting to be delivered, Debby lived over all the years gone before: the slow tides of pain gathering and surging against her soul; but in her waiting the brain of the girl became clearer, striving, it might be, to shake off whatever dull weight had been placed there by birth, poverty, or even chance. The problems of life ceased to be bitter to her as she went down into the valley of the shadow. She had put out her hands blindly in the dark, and she had felt a Hand clasping hers, close and strong; a warm, loving Hand, it seemed to her now, not that of the shadowy Helper of which she had only vague, indefinite ideas before. Quiet, rest, and sleep, they were coming to her. Already she felt the peace stealing over her; it wakened something in Deb's tired heart deeper even than the thought of the child she was leaving. Her poverty, her sore needs, the trials and discipline of life, Jem and his weakness, the great Peace held them all. And then a softer light crept into her eyes. A prayer rose to her lips. She dropped her head upon her clasped hands.

"Our Father who art in Heaven."

But she could not finish it. She was thinking of Jem. "Take care of Jem," she whispered in a hushed, awed voice. "Oh, take care of Jem!"

Over and over it rose to her lips mechanically, but the sound of it brought a strange sense of comfort to her. In another moment a man stood in the open casement, reeled toward her, and caught her in his arms; the thick coils of smoke were blinding, but his touch roused her. She repeated drowsily, "Take care of Jem," felt herself lifted, and knew nothing more until she found herself on the ground and people surrounding her.

Miss Clem and Clarie had watched it all from a safe distance; they had driven rapidly to the bridge, saw the great mill wrapped in sheets of flame, and then both, with one impulse, thought of Jem. It took but a moment to drive to the cottage, but Jem was not there. With the first alarm the frightened child had feebly dragged himself to the scene of the catastrophe; one wild thought giving him strength. He must find Deb. It was Mr. Chantelling who took the little fellow in his arms and made him promise not to stir until he brought his sister to his side. The rector's face was blanched as the child's, but it was not with fear.

When the people below saw the girl standing

alone at the mill window they set up wild shouts of "Save her!" "Where's a ladder?" "Who will go?" But no one offered, and the crowd surged back like a disorderly army pausing for a leader, while above the crackling of the flames rose the sobs and clamor of women.

"My girl's missing!"

"I had three on 'em at the spools!"

And then, as the smoke parted and curled, the woman, circled in by flame, flung up her hands with a wild, uncertain cry, and disappeared.

"Deb!" wailed little Jem. "It is Deb!"

Mr. Chantelling at this moment pushed his way through the crowd. The men were placing a ladder against the wall. Some one was to go up, and a roar of voices mingled with the rush of the flames. Cries of warning and encouragement rose on every side. And Miss Clem and Clarie, still gazing, saw a slight, clerical figure dash up the ladder. It paused a moment, neared the window, then the smoke hid it from sight.

Poor old Miss Clem buried her face in her hands and sobbed like a child; but Clarie sat erect, looking with dry, bright eyes at the point where the figure had disappeared. Whatever latent strength there was in her unformed, childish nature, lifted her at that moment into unnatural heights of courage.

"I wish I could help him!" she thought with a

swelling heart. "I knew he was brave and true—braver than them all—but I did not dream he would dare do this!"

"Oh, Miss Clem," she cried, "I am so proud—so proud of him too!" And, like the contradiction that she was, she burst into a sudden passionate flood of tears.

It seemed an eternity of time before he appeared again; then he bore a drooping, helpless burden in his arms, stepping slowly and painfully on each round, never daring to look down at the sea of white, wondering faces turned upward to him.

"Hurrah! he's saved her!"

"It's the rector—bless his soul! braver than any on us, though he looks so little and woman-like!"

"She's dead! No, fainted."

"He can't go farther. Steady the ladder! Don't you see he's going to fall?"

He was blackened, scorched, disfigured, even in that brief fight with the flames; but he called out with a clear voice, "Some of you take her; I can't bring her any farther."

Instantly a dozen men ran forward. He was within ten or fifteen feet of the ground. Some one ran up, caught the girl, shouted to him to keep up good heart; but there was nothing to break the rector's fall. The ladder swayed and he fell heavily forward, with his face upon the ground.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT WATCH.

DOCTOR LOVELL had come promptly to the relief of the sufferers the moment that he heard of the disaster. It was he who lifted the rector when he fell from the ladder, hastily making a bed of a pile of coats and blankets and laying him carefully upon it, the excited crowd surging about him, everybody longing to do something, and everybody wanting to talk too ; to show their sympathy and respect, and to assure Miss Clem of it, as she knelt in agony by her brother's side, deaf to all the tumult and confusion about her.

The rector's face and hands were bruised with the fall and blackened with smoke ; and, though he looked around as if he were quite conscious of all that was passing, his eyes closed wearily.

Clarie watched the doctor in his hurried examination, then asked breathlessly, "What can be done ? Is he very much hurt ? Is it the fall or the burns ? "

"The fall was nothing, but lifting that woman from the window was a great weight for so slight a

man to sustain, and he is exhausted physically. I would advise you and Miss Clem to hurry to the rectory. I can bring him home much more carefully than any one."

So they took him up; the two women driving home in the phaeton more silently than they had come, leaving May standing a little apart, with Jem Goswald holding to her dress, begging her not to leave him until Debby would wake up and know him again. May longed to follow her sister, but she promised Jem she would stay, and then watched the two carriages until both were out of sight before she could go back to her work of caring for the injured.

Doctor Lovell carried the rector up to the room above the library, and then sat down to watch him: not alone, for Miss Clem would not leave his side for any pretext whatever, nor would she let Clarie.

There was a fire on the open hearth, the curtains were drawn, and a shaded lamp burned softly on a table back of the bed. The room was preternaturally quiet; and even Miss Clem's canary, hanging in the window in a gilded cage, seemed to understand that something unusual was going on, for it suffered its nightly self-decapitation some hours in advance of the regular time, and now was simply a corn-colored cotton ball on a perch.

The doctor settled himself in a large arm-chair and fell to watching the leaping flames, scarcely stirring lest he should waken his sleeping friend. When a faint motion or a restless moan broke the stillness, he rose and went to the bedside; but there was very little that he could do after the burns were dressed. What the rector most needed he was having—quiet and rest. The painful excitement of the day had been too much for a naturally delicate and highly sensitive nervous organization, and though Doctor Lovell apprehended no serious consequences, he would be greatly prostrated for a time. This he whispered to Clarice as she came and knelt down on the hearth-rug before the blaze, looking up inquiringly into his face.

“I am so glad to have you here,” she said, nervously. “You will not go away again to-night?”

“Not unless I am called. I left word at the office where I should be.”

“You are tired, Doctor Lovell,” she began again after a moment’s silence. “You have been very busy among the poor creatures who were hurt.”

“Yes, it is a wonder there were no more killed. There are several that will never see morning, and more than half of them are bruised or have broken limbs. It is the most astonishing thing that people will jump from a third or fourth story window.

Miss Gallatin, there is scarcely a poor house in this village that has not trouble and sorrow in it to-night."

"God help them, poor souls!" she said, her eyes misty with feeling. "I wanted to do something, but everybody was ready to help, and May was there. Oh, Doctor Lovell, she is so good and gentle, and she knows just what is needed at such times; she can do everything much better than I can, so I was ready to come away with Miss Clem, and now there seems to be nothing to do here."

"Nothing but to watch and wait. Rest and perfect quiet are the best medicines our friend can have."

So it happened that it was Clarice who watched that first night with Miss Clem and the doctor. It was a strange, new experience to her. Toward midnight the rector became quieter. He muttered less and less, until his voice died away altogether, and he sank into profound slumber. But Doctor Lovell held to his post unflinchingly. The only rest that he would give himself was in the arm-chair before the fire, and once or twice he lost himself in a doze, undisturbed by the tapping of the boughs against the window-panes or the soft sough of the wind outside. Then, with that curious cog-

nizance of detail which a mind tense with anxiety sometimes possesses, his thoughts wandered away to far-off scenes, and he imagined how loudly the sea must be roaring over the sands of home. He pictured the high rocky coast, the long line of breakers rolling in with steady chime, and remembered how one night, years ago, when he was a boy, a vessel drifted in upon the rocks and went down with every soul on board. How many strong men those cruel waves had borne down and hidden from sight forever, and how like the sea, just as cruel and devouring, was this life surging and beating around him. He thought of the death-beds by which he had already stood, and he so young, and now he was watching perhaps by another; and, how strange it should be, that this man was his friend, and that both loved the same woman. *That* might be something for him to bear in this world. The sea might sweep up to his very feet, and he be left standing upon the sands—waiting—biding his time, taking life as God sent it to him, not as he would have planned it out for himself. It couldn't be a fairy story or a poem to everybody; it might be at some stages, to a woman; but he had his to live, whether he came out scarred and seamed with battle or not. What matter; the scars did not show, they could be covered up, aye he might

himself, after a time, learn to lay his hand upon those very scars without a shiver of pain.

The fire flashed fitfully on the hearth. Watching the flame and idly revolving one thought, then another, his tired eyes closed and he fell into slumber.

Clarie watched by the rector's bed as the dark hours slipped into gray, feeling, in all the plenitude of her youth and strength, no need of rest herself. She made Miss Clem lie down upon the sofa in the next room, promising to call her if anything were needed. She walked from the bed to the window, restlessly looking out and wondering when it would be dawn; and once she paused softly by the arm-chair, and looked down at the face of the sleeping physician. The fire-light shone on his close curled head and dark, handsome face, the somewhat stern character of his beauty softened by the helplessness of sleep, and she caught herself wondering why it was that these two men—so like, yet so unlike—should be such close friends. Dr. Lovell was so manly and strong, and the rector was—she could not say weak after yesterday's trial—but there had always been something feminine about him until yesterday. And then she thought, with a glow of pride, "He may be tender and gentle as a woman, but he has the heart of a lion. I did not know how

strong and brave he was. Dear old Miss Clem, it is no wonder she is so proud and fond of him. I am proud and fond of him too."

At last through the window she saw a faint gray light, and, as she extinguished the lamp and drew back the curtain, the sky showed long waving strips of golden red, fluttering and deepening in the east, with drifts of purplish clouds floating over the cool pearly gray. She went in softly and wakened Miss Clem as she had promised, and then Dr. Lovell roused himself and came up to the window where Clarie was standing, and together they watched the breaking of the morning.

"I have not seen a sunrise for years before," she confessed in a whisper, leaning her head against the window with a long sigh.

"It has been cruel to let you have the morning watch alone," he said. "It is the hardest part of the night always, this dull, waiting for the dawn. You are very tired, Miss Gallatin."

"No," she answered, without looking up.

"But that weary sigh?"

"There was no reason in it. There never is any reason for the things that I do."

Dr. Lovell said nothing, simply because he did not know how to enter a disclaimer, so they stood in silence while the dawn widened slowly into day

about them. And much to her surprise two great tears crept into her eyes as she stood there.

"I think—perhaps—dear Miss Clem, I may be a little tired," she ventured to say. "I will run home very softly now and come back again after breakfast; and, Dr. Lovell, will you come over and take breakfast with us?"

"He will stay with me," interposed Miss Clem in a little whisper; "and oh, Clarie! do have Alice come over at once. I certainly can not be left alone a moment."

The doctor still stood at the window and watched the slight girlish figure crossing the street, and he was still standing there, gazing at the house across the way, when the first flood of sunlight burst into the room, and Mr. Chantelling awoke from his sleep to a full recognition of all around him. But his prostration was so entire that for the moment he had no power to speak, and could only look up at his sister quite helplessly.

To Miss Clem the dear, pale face never seemed more beautiful as the golden glow transfigured it. She bent over and touched his forehead with her lips.

"Harcourt," she said, the tears dimming her eyes, "Harcourt, dear, do you know me?"

He nodded, smiled, put his hand in hers, and dropped asleep again.

He slept in this way for some time, until Alice came in, and she and Miss Clem went down-stairs to see about breakfast together. The sound of the closing door roused him. He opened his eyes, stretched out his hand for the doctor's, held it a moment with a troubled sort of questioning in his gaze; the next instant the question put itself in words, "Who was here a moment ago?"

"One of the Miss Gallatins."

"Which one?"

"Miss Alice."

He looked disappointed, turned his head wearily on the pillow, and waited as if to gain strength.

"Has she been here all the time?"

"No; Miss Clarie watched last night."

"May was not here at all?" he whispered half sadly.

"We left her with Debby Goswald. She came down to the mill soon after the news spread through the village, and she worked there among the poor women as hard as any one in Briarly. She stood by me and saw you come down the ladder with Debby in your arms."

The rector was visibly agitated.

"God bless her! God bless her!" he said again and again. Then, after a pause, "Where is she now?"

“I left her at one of the mill cottages. There was a little bobbin-boy that jumped from one of the windows. He was badly crushed, and he could not live longer than morning. She held him while I did all that could be done to ease his pain. I never saw more nerve. And the child clung to her as if he thought she could save him, and the mother sat by her side sobbing and shivering and not able to do a thing. I did not wonder, poor soul! But how Miss Gallatin quieted her! She said she would stay until I came again, for I told her I should not leave you, Chantelling.”

The rector smiled, pressed his friend's hand, and closed his eyes in sleep again.



CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW OUTLOOK.

AUTUMN was growing old, but it was dying royally, and deepening in color as it died ; a ripe, warm, full-death, as if nature were wasteful of her infinite strength in uttering this glowing protest against inevitable decay. The red berries dropped from the barberry-trees, and heavy drifts of leaves lay thick on the window-sills. But through all the warm-scented blaze of color, hints of coming winter began to be heard ; faint whispers of storm brooded among the restless boughs, though the winds still loved to dally and linger, holding in their embrace the sensuous glow of all the unforgotten summer days.

It had been an anxious time in the village. Doctor Lovell had plenty of work to do, both day and night, for there was scarcely a mill-hand that had escaped injury of some sort. Debby Goswald had been very ill from nervous prostration, and Jem too had suffered a relapse. The girl with the braided jacket had put on another robe, and now

her hands were folded in an idleness of which she had no knowledge before; and Jinny and Kitty were both sleeping the same long sleep.


At the rectory the time had passed monotonously. The rector himself was not seriously ill, but he had suffered much from exhaustion, and it took him a long time to recuperate. When he walked about the room it was feebly, with staggering, uncertain steps, like a child, and his improvement was slower than had been anticipated. Miss Clem lost appetite and grew sharp-faced and pale with repeated watching and anxiety. She would not give up her place to the Gallatin girls, though it was noticeable that when Alice came she relented the severity of her watch, and refreshed herself with folding her hands and taking a nap on the chintz lounge in the room adjoining.

Every day, and sometimes twice a day, Doctor Lovell came; not for a professional visit as much as to have the long, quiet, brotherly talk, which was now an apparent necessity with both. He often met the young ladies from across the way, but never since that one burst of confidence had the rector spoken of his love for Clarie and its utter hopelessness. But it seemed strange, and hard to reconcile with the Reverend Harcourt's decision, that of the three ladies Clarice was the one of the most

found by his side. Between these two there seemed to be a perfect understanding, but an entire absence of anything like sentiment. And in all this everyday meeting Doctor Lovell too had come to know her very well. Of course it was not quite comfortable for him to meet her so often in his visits to the rectory; it was not quite comfortable to sit by in apparent stoicism and listen to them as they made plans about the mission school, and the music, and what should be done when the rector was well enough to take up his burdens again. He repulsed and shut it out, but it came back to him with a pertinacity that would not be put aside. Sometimes he looked upon himself with wonder that he could continue to have this man for his dearest friend. Would it be so if the Reverend Harcourt changed his mind and married Clarie? he wondered. Would his own friendship, strong as he thought it now, be able to bear that test? His whole soul shrank from such a possibility, and for the first time he began to dread meeting the young girl. It was an altogether different sensation from anything he had ever experienced before. It was not so much a desire to be away from her as a fierce pain and conviction that it was wrong for him to meet her daily, and so forge and rivet his own chains more closely. There was but one thing for

him to do, and that, in justice to his friend, he could do at once. He must stay away. The simple decision set his heart beating as it had never beaten before. But he did not change his mind. The rector did not really need his services any longer. There were many sick people in Briarly, and a physician is always implicitly believed if he pleads professional engagements. It was hard—hard for him. Meeting her daily in the pleasant unconventional life that the two families had adopted, it had been natural that he should have drifted into something more than the position of mere ordinary friend and physician. And Clarie was not quite the same either. She had put aside her proud, cold, half-offended ways, and gave the doctor a sort of timid respect and shy friendliness that opened his heart to her more and more. Never had her society been so sweet as in that week or two of watching and caring for the rector in his invalidism. Never had he realized more completely how true and noble a nature was hers. And now to give it all up, and for the rector—a man who had said distinctly that he should never marry—"he had the Church—he should always have the Church."

He took off his hat to be cooler, though it was a chill evening in autumn, and walked home under



the dry trees, his head throbbing and aching with thought.

The next day he called at the rectory at an hour when he knew Clarie would be engaged. It was a hurried professional visit, in which he scarcely trusted himself to look into his friend's eyes, fearful lest he should read the determination that was lurking there. He felt like a culprit, a Judas, when Miss Clem prattled innocently of his great kindness and her brother's affection for him, and he hurriedly pleaded an engagement; indeed, he might not be in again for several days—he had two severe cases in hand—the rector could send for him should he be needed. So, in spite of his effort to make it otherwise, it assumed the appearance of a sort of farewell between them, in which both Doctor Lovell and the Reverend Harcourt were faintly conscious that an impalpable something was rising up as a barrier between them. Both were sensitive, both were hurt; and the doctor went away to attend to his severe cases, with anything but a comfortable feeling in his heart.

Of course this state of things could not last. When three days had passed Doctor Lovell presented himself suddenly in his friend's room again. He found him on a lounge, looking pale and worn;

but his face brightened visibly as he held out both hands in welcome.

"I think my illness has enfeebled my mind as well as my body, Lovell," he began. "Now tell me at once why you have stayed away."

"I have not been so busy since I came to Briarly," and the doctor dropped into a chair and took his friend's hand in his own, with a glad, happy thrill in his heart, as if he had lost something very, very dear and found it again quite unexpectedly; but he avoided a direct look into the Reverend Harcourt's eyes, which were full of eager questioning.

"The fact is, Chantelling, I have been a little overworked lately. That sounds silly for a man with my physique to say, I suppose; but my practice is extending rapidly, and I am afraid I don't go about the thing coolly enough. One makes a great mistake in using up so much nerve power when one is young. If one only could be cold-blooded, you know."

"Yes, I know," said the rector; "don't talk against time, Lovell—let us understand each other at once—don't let anything mar our friendship now. What has kept you away from me for three whole days?" and his eyes, mild as they certainly were, had a look in them that was more of command than pleading.

The doctor started, then flushed.

"I—I couldn't come," he faltered; and then the desire to unbosom himself suddenly became too strong for repression. "I don't believe you can ever understand what it has been to meet her here every day by your side; to hear her talk—to consult you, to make plans with you for your future work, in which I could have no share. My business was simply professional. To cure you—for her!" he ended quite bitterly. "I was ashamed of myself, too. I was ashamed to call myself your friend. Yet I found out that I had a nature I could not change. I have tried my utmost to put her out of my heart, but I love Clarie Gallatin as well now as when I first told you of it. There! That is my full confession, Chantelling."

"Clarie?" said the rector, a strange, bewildered look creeping over his face. "Clarie Gallatin? I have made a mistake, I fear;" but there was that in his face that threw a flood of light upon Doctor Lovell's mind, and he answered in a low voice, that trembled in spite of his effort to overcome it:

"My friend, my dear friend, did you think I meant Miss Gallatin—May?"

"You said Miss Gallatin," said the rector simply.

"So I did; I remember. I always spoke of her

as Miss Gallatin," was his agitated reply. "Oh, how miserably you have misunderstood me all along! And you—you have loved her?"

"All my life."


"And you never spoke?"

"How could I? And how could I lose what I had never dared ask for? I had no right to stand in your way."

"But why did you not speak?"

"I have had my dreams," confessed the rector sadly. "I had my theories too. One was of a life wholly dedicated to God and His Church, as I had hoped mine was dedicated. Oh, Lovell, I didn't want an earthly love to intrude. I wanted to give it all to Him. It is a thing that pleases young men when they first dip into theology. It seemed to me heroic and noble to thus consecrate a life, but after a time it looked pitiful and small when I thought how little God cared for such sacrifices; and then I outgrew my delusion; but it was too late. She never cared for me, except in a quiet, brotherly way. Then you came; well, that ended it."

"But it is not ended!" cried Doctor Lovell impetuously. "If you love her, win her, and crown your life with the chrism of a holy and enduring love."



"I think it is too late," said the rector. "Now, Lovell, let me hear your story; but"—passing his hand over his brow—"I am afraid I am a little confused; you will have to begin all over again."

"Yes," answered the doctor, "that is just what I am going to do. And when I have come to the end I will tell you the whole story, if you choose to hear it then."

And he took up his hat, bent down over the rector, and said, "Chantelling, if you were a woman I should kiss you good-night."

And so he went out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THEIR HEARTS.

MAY and Miss Clem were sewing and chatting together in the library window, when Doctor Lovell ran down the stairs and passed out at the front door. A moment after, Mr. Chantelling came feebly into the room. He drew up an easy-chair between the two ladies, laid his head upon the cushioned back, and closed his eyes with a smile of content upon his face that was quite unusual to see.

"I think Doctor Lovell has grown very neglectful of you, Harcourt," began Miss Clem; "very neglectful indeed! He has not been near you for three whole days, and, now that he has come, only gives you five minutes' attention."

"Ten minutes, dear Miss Clem," corrected May, looking up at the clock and smiling.

"Well, ten minutes then. May, my love, you have grown so precise since you opened that school. I can't say that I exactly like it; and, oh!

I am sure," shaking her curls dubiously, "that I shall never be reconciled to that school."

"Nor shall I, May," interpolated the rector without opening his eyes. "I have been thinking it all over, and I want to forbid another term. I wonder if you would be quite content to give it up if I asked you?"

May looked up surprised. There was something in the Reverend Harcourt's voice that she could not quite understand.

"But why should you ask me to give it up now, Mr. Chantelling, when you gave it your unqualified approval only two or three months ago? Nothing has changed since then."

"I think I have changed myself, May," said the rector softly, and then he opened his eyes, took off his glasses, as he usually did when anything troubled or puzzled him, dropped them on his knee, and leaned his head back again.

"Of all extraordinary men, certainly Harcourt is the most extraordinary!" argued old Miss Clem inwardly; "one can never count upon the thing he is going to do. A clergyman, a man with staid, self-controlled habits, and yet as full of surprises as a juggler! Of course he intends asking for Alice, and it is only right May should be the first one consulted; she, poor thing, being the head of the

family, now that the doctor is gone. But of all times to seek for her, this certainly strikes me as the most inconvenient, when he has had hundreds yes, positively hundreds, of the loveliest chances in the world. There was that time when May asked his advice about starting the school. I as good as told him then to do it. Now, there's the family mending on hand, and ever so many dozens of napkins that I wanted May to mark. But that is the way with a man. And, oh dear! I know he doesn't want me in the room when he takes off his glasses and looks as if he'd speak if I were not here."

These thoughts flashed through her mind like lightning in a summer sky. She gathered the piles of snowy linen in her arms, half-inclined to resent the Reverend Harcourt's tardiness, and stay now in spite of him; but love for her pet Alice overcame all her scruples.

"I declare! Doctor Lovell is going across the street into the house, May," peeping through the window blinds. "Pray, what can he be wanting there? Do you think any one is sick? I have a great mind to go over, Harcourt."

"No one is sick," said May, turning her eyes inquiringly upon the rector. "Did he tell you what he was going over for?"

"To see Clarie, I believe."

"She is alone, painting in the drawing-room to-day."

"And where is Alice, pray?" inquired Miss Clem.

"Alice went to see Debby this morning."

"Alice should be here," said the discontented schemer sternly. "It is Alice's place to be here."

But she gathered together her piles of linen, giving no heed to May's surprised inquiry as to her hurrying away, and went up to her own room, dropping into her little rocker with a long sigh of relief. "The worst of being an old maid is that one can't find her proper sphere," she ruminated. "One never knows when one is wanted. I feel just like Mohammed's coffin sometimes; but if Harcourt will only speak now I shall not care. I will stay in my own room and be content to rock in this window-seat all the days of my life. But oh! Alice, why couldn't you have been here, so he could have said it to you first? It has taken him so long to make up his mind; though, to be sure, it is 'better late than never,' as we used to write in our copy-books. Dear me! what a funny thing life is; but I am persuaded that Harcourt is going to speak now." And Miss Clem shook her bottle of indelible ink and marked the napkins herself, with unusually fishy tails to the g's, out of the very exuberance of her joy.

Meantime the Reverend Harcourt spoke.

May had risen to go, when Miss Clem vanished. "I think Clarie would like me to come back," she began; but the rector put out his hand and touched her arm.

"Don't go," he said; "don't leave me with myself! Come to me, May."

She looked up, their eyes met, and in that instant she comprehended that they stood closer to each other than they had ever stood before; his, full of earnest questioning, met the soul that looked out of hers, pure and true as his own. But she did not come to him. She stood, looking down at him, longing to say something of that which lay at her heart, struggling for utterance, and yet not daring to frame it into speech. He saw the great embarrassment in her face, and gathered both her hands in his.

"There have been times," he began, in a smothered voice, "when I thought you belonged to me. I needed you then, May, just as I need you now, but I dared not offer you a divided heart. I wanted it all for God and His Church, never dreaming that I could serve Him and love Him better if you shared my work with me. There was one time—but it was years ago—you can not remember, child, as I can—but I longed to ask you

then. My heart was torn in twain between duty and love, and duty won the day."

"I remember," said May softly, and if there were any lingering pain in her heart at the memory, she kept it down for his sake.

"You remember?" a flush of surprise crossing his face. "Oh, May! will it be too late? I need you now even more than I did then. I can be nothing without you. Come to me, May."

She came to him and put her hand in his.

"Can you love me now?" he said, still looking in her eyes.

"Yes, I love you; I have loved you all my life; and now I do not think I have anything more to wish for in this world."

There was no embarrassment in her manner as she made this simple avowal; her face was calm and full of a sweet, subtle happiness, and her eyes looked far away, as if already seeing the joy the years would bring to her.

He gathered her in his arms and put his lips to hers. Then he said, "May, will you go with me and help me tell Clem?"

And across the street Clarie was sitting alone with Doctor Lovell. He had come in as if it were quite his usual custom, although both he and

Clarie were sensitively alive to the fact that this was the first time he had entered the house since Doctor Gallatin's death.

The room was very still, the fire on the hearth burned low and clear, striking out and glorifying everything it touched, even to the warm, deep tints of the old crimson furniture; and Clarie, sitting in its vivid glow, with folded hands and dreamy eyes, looked a pretty domestic priestess—a very Penates—in the young physician's eyes. She had been drawing, making a little sketch for one of her pupils to copy; but the healthful flame had kindled such sweet memories in her heart that she pushed it aside and leaned back in her chair to dream. All the hard, dusty path that she had traveled for the past six months was blotted out, and an easy, broad road lay stretching, white and sunny, before her. The quiet house seemed to-night the same old home again, full of love and content; the dear presence that had once filled it was there, and the eyes, full of love, looking down into hers; aye she could almost feel the touch of the familiar fingers on her head. It was a foolish trick of hers, and Clarie knew it, this idle dreaming over that which could never come again, this desperate clutching for an uncertain hope, trying to build up a future happiness out of a present pain

And yet she loved her little dreams. She could not live without them. She knew the next hour, the next moment perhaps, she would waken and take up those little burdens that seemed hard and impossible for her to bear; but while the dream lasted it was so beautiful to drift back into that life to which she had said farewell forever—how could she resist it?

It was Doctor Lovell who roused her, and brought her to every-day things again. He came gravely and quietly into the room, holding out his hand with his usual self-control, but he sat down by her side with something like timidity.

“I hope I am not intruding upon your solitude,” he began, with a savage delight in his heart that he had her all to himself for the first time in his life, and it was his own fault now if he could not make himself understood. “You know you gave me permission to come and see you some day.”

Clarie murmured some indistinct words of politeness; but she had come out of her dream with reluctance, and it gave her a sort of pre-occupied, grave air that did not suit Doctor Lovell in the least. If you know a man's nature you can easily comprehend the reason. Anything, even positive indifference, is preferable to calm courtesy; and this impassioned quiet said plainer than words that

he was nothing to her. He was not quite prepared to say the thing that trembled on his lips, and for a moment it hung there unsaid, while his thoughts took rapid flight. When he sat down by her side his impulse had been to pour the whole truth out on the spot; but, by some mental intuition, he felt she was ready to oppose him, and the beginning was not easy. And Clarie herself felt a sudden, tremulous fear that lent for a moment power and perception to her; and when Doctor Lovell spoke, his voice vibrated through her painfully, leaving a sudden tension of every faculty she possessed.

"Is this the only welcome you can give me?" he asked after this little, breathless, fragmentary pause, which seemed to give all the more emphasis to his words, and caused Clarie to lift her head, looking at him with cheeks alternately white and crimson, stammering something about not understanding him.

The most foolish speech that she could have made of course; but how was Clarie to know that the thing above all others he most desired was the very privilege of explanation she now gave him?

He bent toward her with a sudden, rapid movement, indicative at once of impulsive, but absolute self-surrender. "If you will only listen, and let me tell you what my coming here and knowing

you has been to me, perhaps you can understand," he began eagerly. "It has opened a new life to me. Everything is different; the very earth itself. There is a new meaning and a new light upon the whole world. There has been ever since that night when you promised to be my friend. But I am not satisfied with friendship now. I want you to give me more than that. After all these days and weeks of silent learning of each other's hearts, can you give me nothing deeper—tenderer?"

"You—you are very generous," she said, with a sense of having received all that he was capable of giving, and speaking softly in spite of herself. "Do you know I think you have been helping raise my faith in mankind since I have known you so well. I hardly thought such disinterested"—she hesitated a moment—"friendship could be found in this world."

"But I am not disinterested," he interrupted, looking straight into her eyes. "I told you I wanted something more than friendship; but the last thing I would do is to weary or importune you. If you could give me no hope, I should ask you to tell me at once, so that I might—might not annoy you any more," he finished rather abruptly.

She drew herself up, looking at him for the first time with a feeling she could hardly define. It

was almost like touching another and a higher kind of existence. As a friend he was perfect—but a lover!—this involved subtleties of which she had no experience.

“I am not quite certain about myself,” she said hesitatingly, and longing that she could be rude enough to rush away from him. Her resistant courage did not come to her aid just then, simply because he had been making her acutely conscious of all that she was losing if he were sent away; and yet she could endure his direct gaze no longer. She rose hastily from her seat, walking away a little distance, then turning to face him again with a pretty gesture half of contempt, half of menace.

“I hate love-making!” she said emphatically. “You were much more interesting arguing in the cause of friendship. There is something sacred in that; the other is intolerable! Pray never mention it again.”

He turned pale, was silent for a moment, then said in a miserable sort of way, “Will it always be so?”

“I think it will,” with an assumption of gravity and half regret, as she saw the wretchedness he did not attempt to conceal. “I don’t want a lover,” she said impulsively; “I want a friend. It is rather hard to disappoint me this way!”

And then there was just a perceptible pause as he bowed over her hand, said good-bye, and left the room.

Almost immediately after the hall door closed May came in, and, to her surprise, found Clarie sobbing bitterly.

She looked up at her sister's tender inquiry, "What can have happened, child?" biting her lips to keep back her sobs; and then going up to her, putting her hands on her shoulder and dropping her voice to the lowest whisper. "Don't ask me now, May. It is useless to cry and feel bad over anything in this world; but we are all babies sometimes, and I—I have lost my rattle too. I'll find it again, you'll see, or I'll learn not to care for it, and take up with a doll."

"Dolls and rattles?" queried May, opening her eyes.

"It amounts to the same thing; yes, dear." And then she put her arms around her sister's neck again and said brokenly: "Do love me a little, May!"

"A little!" cried May with pretended indignation. "You more than extortionate Jew! Even the pound of flesh will not satisfy you. But I want you to be serious now, dear; Doctor Lovell must have been saying something; tell me what it was."

"I haven't a thing to tell you," said Clarie perversely, "except that I want you to love me I don't care a fig for anybody else in the world; and I am sure if I want to be wretched just for a minute, and for the sake of having a little variety in my life, it isn't anybody's business but my own.

There was a moment's silence after this, and in the pause and hush May's blue eyes grew soft and brooding again.

"Come and sit down by me, dear," she said gently. "If you have nothing to tell me, I have a great deal to tell you—you and Alice, both together."

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CHAPTER XIX.

AFTERWARD.

MOST lives have times of waiting in them—halting spots, as it were—little, still pauses when our book of life lies open before us, but the pages are turned slowly, and our hands linger over the writing. We wait for our story—be it happiness or sorrow—not caring to dream what it may be. And this is what May Gallatin had been doing for several years. She was content that her times of waiting had been in God's hand, not her own. It had been enough for her to sit in the sweet shadows of a memory and let the years grow holier as they drifted noiselessly by, bearing her nearer to a perfect joy with each day's waiting. She had even thought her book closed forever, and now it was open again—the page as fair and unsullied as the new life she had just begun.

It seemed fit that it all should come to her in the early spring-time, when the earth was most full of promise—this new name, and new life of her's—when the warm south winds were blowing—

when the violets grew thick upon the meadows, and tall, fair lilies swung their noiseless bells to usher in the blessed Easter-tide.

They were married very early in the morning, at St. Michael's—Mr. Chantelling and May—with neither bridesmaids, carriages, nor wedding-guests. Mr. Chantelling walked down to the church before breakfast, and Miss Clem—with eyes that were tenderer than ever, if that were possible—followed in the carriage containing the three Gallatin girls. The Bishop was waiting in the vestry with the rector, and, when the ceremony was over, they all went home together and had a cheerful breakfast, just as if nothing unusual had happened, except that May took her seat at the head of the table, instead of Miss Clem, and afterward the Bishop paid a visit to the house of the Senior Warden, and electrified the entire household with the news that he had driven over somewhat early to have the pleasure of breakfasting with Mr. and Mrs. Chantelling!

Of course no one liked it. No one ever does like such high-handed proceedings—and no one ever likes the clergyman's choice—that is, at first. If he married all the cardinal virtues, and an embryo saint into the bargain, there would still be some discontented souls who would think it might

have been better. After a time, however, when they saw May Chantelling was just as sweet and unassuming as May Gallatin had been, they began to say it could be worse; all but Jane Lewis. Jane, who had felt herself "born with a vocation"—*she* shook her sparse locks coldly, and said "it was an extremely difficult position for any *young* person to fill; she hoped it would turn out well, but Mr. Chantelling was *so* impetuous."

As for Miss Clem, I am sorry to record that she nearly lost her wits on this auspicious occasion. Not that she was displeased at her brother's deliberate choosing for himself, and not that she did not love May dearly—indeed she opened her arms to the fatherless girl, and took her to her heart as if she had been her own choice all along—but she still clung to her old belief—it was Alice who should be queen of the rector's heart—Alice, the wise one of the family. And Harcourt—who *could* have dreamed that he would be so blind and insensible! And then such a very odd courtship—in fact, no courtship at all. She was quite sure that on the eventful morning, when she retired to her own room, that May might have the felicity of giving Alice away, without a third party to listen to the rector's entreaties; she was quite sure she had not been alone five minutes when they came

in together, and the Reverend Harcourt, bending down to kiss her forehead with more than his usual effusion, said, "Clem, congratulate me; May has been making me the happiest of men." "Then she has given Alice to you," the old lady said, beaming upon the pair with one of her most radiant smiles, and pronouncing it as a fact, not an interrogation. But she never forgot the answer, "No Clem, she has been giving me herself!" Really, when she thought it all over, she wondered sometimes that she had not gone insane on the spot! Not that she was sorry—bless May's dear heart, no—but it gave her such a turn! and to have no romance—no courtship—nothing but the quiet understanding that was so utterly unfathomable—certainly it was no wonder that Miss Clem was silent from sheer astonishment. And then again no wedding—no cake—but just a nice little breakfast, and then May sitting down in the library with her work, and a smile of placid content on her face, while the rector cut the leaves of a new magazine and read the leading article aloud to her. It was the oddest bridal festivity! To be sure, the Reverend Harcourt had drawn his easy-chair as close to May's as was seemly for a clergyman and a man of his well-known reticence and deliberation; but—it wouldn't have been Miss Clem's way. She

gathered up her work-basket, crotcheting, and fine mending, and announced that she should take a wedding trip if the happy pair did not. She really felt that she was needed now at the other house; the idea of two orphan girls having things all their own way, it really was her duty to see to them. So it came to pass that she and May exchanged places, as it were, and for a week Miss Clem resolutely endured her self-banishment. At the expiration of that time she came out of her state of astonishment and perplexity, and vibrated like a pendulum from one house to the other, pleased with everything and everybody, and flinging the information broadcast throughout the parish that her brother was a *very* wise man, and his choice had *her* thorough approval. Nevertheless this acquiescence brought with it some perplexities. There was Alice still to be provided for. Miss Clem knit her brows and took another look about her. She had been waiting too as well as May—turning over the book of life very slowly, and lingering in a dreamy happiness over the reading of it; but now she considered it high time for her to wake up. The pause was over, and existence had begun again. It was Doctor Lovell—that rising young practitioner—a man of position and culture; he it was, and he alone, who was worthy of Alice. It

was very odd that she had never thought of him before !

To this end she contrived all manner of excuses to bring him into the Gallatin household, wondering at his evident reluctance in coming, but pleased, beyond her wildest expectations, when he did come, that he devoted himself so exclusively to Alice and took so little notice of Clarie. She even feigned one or two headaches, varying it with decided symptoms of heart disease, and might have become utterly bedridden in her enthusiasm, had not a little occurrence sent her *chateaux en Espagne* tumbling about her ears for the second time, and eventually causing her to give up her architectural pastimes for all time to come. It was simply the announcement of Clarie's engagement to Doctor Lovell.

How it all came about no one ever knew, not even Clarie. And it was certainly the last thing that Doctor Lovell had intended. It would have been extremely difficult to describe the effect produced upon his mind by his last interview with Clarie. She had disappointed him by her indifference and wounded him by her petulant insensibility—not that he felt in the least a charming and irresistible personage ; on the contrary, he had moments of great depression regarding his inferi-

ority and unfitness for the position he craved. Her very peremptory rejection of him, her *brusquerie*, her childish candor, and the energy with which she had sent him away—though he was loth to admit it—only increased his admiration of her. She was so unlike, so much better than he. All her little fluctuations of temper, her pride, her decided opinions, were lovely to him—lovelier than the few charming traits of character which she certainly did possess, and which gave him an indulgent feeling toward her, an excuse to throw the glamour of love, like a veil, over any little flaw or imperfection. He did not mean to go on loving her in a hopeless sort of fashion, like the men one reads of in sensational novels; on the contrary, he intended to put her out of his heart as soon as possible, but—it was Miss Clem's fault—and it was simply out of his power to frame any excuse why he, the only physician in the place, should not visit her professionally, though it was a thing as incomprehensible as unreasonable why she should choose the other house for her seasons of illness. May was all that a sweet and tender sister should be, and quite willing to intrust the management of the household to Miss Clem, as usual; but that volatile lady had taken a vacation for the first time in her life, and it was apparently so absorbing

and pleasant that it was quite impossible to persuade her into taking up her old burdens.

So it came to pass that the Doctor met Clarie almost daily. At first there was some constraint, as was natural; but after a time, in Miss Clem's hours of sprightly convalescence, it was really rather delightful than otherwise to meet her, though he avoided anything like direct conversation, and was politely assiduous enough to Alice to satisfy even Miss Clem; but kept that innocent schemer in a settled state of invalidism, and caused May and her husband much secret perturbation, though Miss Clem assured them that Doctor Lovell was making a most perfect cure of her case, as indeed her pink cheeks and bright eyes could sufficiently testify to. As for Doctor Lovell himself, though he wondered over Miss Clem's ailments, and at first was inclined to laugh at them, his visits drifted almost insensibly into settled habit. He intended to tell her each day that she really needed him no longer, but each day allowed himself to be detained upon the most trivial pretext. He lingered near Clarie, hoping for he knew not what—praying that something might happen—that she might tell him she was nearly broken-hearted because she had been silly enough

to reject so fascinating a personage, or indeed anything else equally absurd and irrational. But the way it all ended was odd enough, and, in that one respect, sufficiently like Clarie to be proper.

She had gone out one summer afternoon to stray away by herself, beyond Debby's cottage and past the mill bridge. It was a radiantly bright day; no clouds in the still blue, and no wind to disturb, even by a whisper, the absolute serenity and repose about her. She seated herself under a tree and arranged the flowers she had been gathering in a basket, then folded her hands and was soon lost in thought. It was just the day to dream. She went back a year. She thought of all that had passed since then—her father's death—May's marriage—the repulse she had given Doctor Lovell—the solitude of the old house—the two lonely girls who made it their home. But her dream was broken in upon, and all her thoughts scattered to the winds, when she heard a step approaching. She was a little disturbed, but not positively annoyed, when she looked up and saw that the intruder was Doctor Lovell, though she rose at once, promptly lifting her basket and turning to take the path home. He walked along by her side, indulging in some vague conversation, as the sunset lights faded,

feeling an indescribable sense of embarrassment, and yet not having the courage to put fate aside and speak boldly.

"Do you know, Miss Clarie," he said at length, "that it is just about a year since I came to Briarly?"

"I was thinking of that when I sat down by the river," she replied; "I was going into a little retrospection. How much has happened since then, and how strangely and sadly our lives have changed. I think I miss my dear father more than at first, Doctor Lovell," raising her soft eyes to his face. "People say time can efface any memory, but, oh! I think I shall never forget."

Her voice had sunk to the lowest whisper; her eyes were full of tears as she spoke. He longed to take her to his heart and comfort her, but he dared not trust himself with even the few kind words that rose to his lips.

"I have been sorry many times that I came. It has all been wrong from the beginning, and now—I wanted to speak to you of it first. I have very nearly made up my mind to go away."

"To stay?" asked Clarie, with a little tremble in her voice.

"Yes, to stay; to go into some city—possibly go abroad again—anything to make a change."

"But why need you desire change?" she questioned, with a little, rising color.

"You know I have no home, no ties to bind me to one spot. Once it seemed to me that my whole world was here," looking at her so she could not bear his eyes; "now there is nothing I can call my own. I feel myself a mere waif on the stream of Time. It would be different if I had some relative, or dear friend, or even a house of my own."

"There is papa's office," said Clarie, speaking very low and very fast. "Everything is just as he left it—his chairs, his books; you had no objection to take his practice—it would only be proper to call everything that pertained to it your own now."

"Stop a moment—the road is rough here, won't you take my arm? Don't you know that you have made it impossible for me to do all this? I do not want your father's place or practice, or indeed anything more of his, since I can not have the one only thing that would make that position tolerable."

There are some little things in life that we remember so well when we grow older. All her life afterward Clarie remembered this day, and how she had paused, with her hand on Doctor Lovell's arm, while he said those few words. She forgot a thousand other things, but she never forgot that—that summer afternoon down by the river bank,

when she felt for the first time what it would be to her if he were to go away from her forever.

"But—I thought—" clasping his arm closer, "perhaps—I see no reason why you could not have that too."

"I was only taking you at your word," bending down to look into her face.

"But you ought to know," she stammered; "I am only a woman—and—I think I have changed my mind."

.

And here my story must end.

There is so little, so very little to tell. There are phases more vivid in the every-day lives of the people about us, than those of whom I have written, I do not doubt. Life is continually repeating itself—sometimes in poetry, oftener in prose—love and joy, and pain and self-sacrifice—there is nothing new to tell, and our own hearts are full of such unwritten history.

But for the wedding that followed before another year had rolled around, I think I should lay my pen down here, and of that I shall merely speak, for no one could possibly do justice to Miss Clem's joy and pride. It was *such* a comfort that after so many, many years of expectancy and disappointment that there should be a wedding—not an irregular

proceeding like Harcourt's—in the family after all. She nearly wore herself out in endeavoring to be a mother to Clarie, who, for the first time in her life, agreed with her in all the minutiae relative to cake, dress, and wedding-guests. As for the feast it was the essence of all the wedding feasts of which Miss Clem had dreamed for more than half a century.

Of course all the parish were there: first at the church, and after the ceremony at the other house, which was thrown open in the old, hospitable manner once more. Even Deb and Jem were there, and Clarie had a comfortable seat arranged for the hunchbacked girl in one of the kitchen windows where she could look through and see all the fine company assembled.

Deb had been in failing health since the burning of the mill, and people had grown very tender with her, and kind to Jem, who was now promoted to the position of office-boy to Doctor Lovell. Ever since that one night of horror, when she had folded her arms to die, she had been a changed creature. The blank dullness of her life had been swept away, and she no longer looked upon it as a bitter cheat and failure. In those dark hours of facing death she had found Him to be a friend, not a foe, and her love and trust had grown and strengthened into a quiet hope which she once had

thought it impossible to possess. Mr. Chantelling she looked upon with something more than reverence, and Clarie had grown to be perfect in her eyes. She gazed at the young bride, in all the surpassing loveliness of her bridal robes, with tears of honest pride and admiration, but she did not dream for one moment that Clarie would come out to speak to her. It was a sight Jem never forgot— young Mrs. Lovell in her wedding-dress. “A cracklin’ white satin,” as he afterward informed his bobbin-boy friends, “a-trailin’ along on the kitchen-floor, and she not holding it up a mite, and shakin’ hands with us all round, as if we was company too,” and then he added his first impression of her, “My eye! aint she a stunner!”

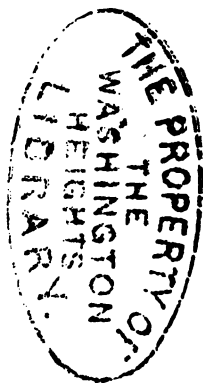
Miss Clem had the felicity of receiving the guests with the bride, and otherwise conducting as if she were the acknowledged head of the household, which was quite as gratifying to her as the seat in the kitchen window had been to Deb and Jem. The old lady’s face was flushed with enthusiasm as she dispensed compliments and wedding-cake simultaneously, beaming upon everybody as if the dream of her life was now fulfilled. She could not refrain, however, from giving Mrs. Abury a brief insight into her heart in one of the pauses of her hospitality.

"It has all ended very nicely, Mrs. Abury," she fluttered, "very nicely indeed—in fact, much better than I at one time expected. But I shall never understand a man—never in all my life—nor for the matter of that, some women—Clarie, for instance. She never could endure Doctor Lovell—oh! I assure you it is quite true; there was a time when she positively detested him, and now—my dear, she adores him! absolutely adores him! And she isn't a bit ashamed that every one should know it, which perhaps is all right and proper. I think she makes it a sort of expiation—a sort of expiation, you know; and as for Harcourt, why, a Chinese-puzzle isn't a circumstance to him. To think I should have been deluded all my life into thinking it was Alice he wished to marry. Why, though he has been married a year, and though I love May-dearly, I haven't gotten over it yet—for he *did* delude me, Mrs. Abury. He didn't mean to, you know, but he certainly succeeded. But Alice cares for no one, I am thankful to say, and we shall be the two happiest women in the whole world, I think, when we can settle down together and let these married people stay up in their rose-colored clouds until they are ready to come down again. But, oh! Mrs. Abury, I may laugh about it, but I do love dearly to see an old-fashioned

love marriage. I was never intended to be an old maid; why, you know I even had my wedding-dress made—not a bit like this—dear no—” and Miss Clem looked down with disdain at the multitude of her knife-plaitings, and smoothed the silken glory of her upper skirt. “*My* wedding-dress I have yet, though it was a merciful Providence I never wore it. It is sweetly pretty still—such a fine white satin—all piped and corded, and eight-and-sixpence the yard.”

But bless the dear old soul! We have all heard about that wedding-dress before. It really is not necessary to have Miss Clem tell it again—is it?

THE END.



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